FRENCH SOCIALISM AND WOMEN TEXTILE WORKERS 1880-1914
A REGIONAL STUDY (LILLE, ROUBAIX AND TOURCOING)

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French Socialism and women textile workers, 1880-1914; a regional study (Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing).

This dissertation is a study of the origins and character of socialist-feminism in France in the generation before 1914, based on an investigation of the social and political experiences of the female textile labour force in the Lille arrondissement.

The first part of the thesis is a detailed account of the domestic and work context of the lives of women workers in this region. It looks at their numbers, health, work conditions, wages, occupations, etc, and at how these changed over the period.

The second part of the thesis describes various organisations available to working women in these years and their appeal. The emphasis is on socialist and syndicalist movements in the region, but there is also a discussion of various religious and patronal organisations, as well as independent unions.

There follows a discussion of whether women joined such movements, and why they might not have done so. This is set in the context of a discussion of women's social activities in this region, including organised strike actions, mass protests and the like. The argument is that women were very active in their work context and not at all 'passive', even though there may have been specific grounds for their failure to join official labour and other organisations in large numbers.

The last third of the thesis follows in chronological detail the fortunes of the Parti Ouvrier Français and the SFIO in their attempts to mobilise women behind their labour and political movements. It is argued that the early emphasis placed by French marxists on organising working women as such died away, later to be replaced by a renewed interest in women, but no longer with the same emphasis upon their membership of the proletariat. This change, and the socialists' failure to capitalise upon the radicalism of the early female proletariat, is invoked to help explain the mould into which post-1914 French socialism has been cast in its responses to the question of female emancipation.

While this last section deals with broader issues, it is grounded in evidence drawn from the Lille region, both because the area was crucial to the history of French socialism and in order to base general arguments upon the closely-focussed social and economic history of a particular female workforce.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Hubertine Auclert. One of the first socialist feminists, active during the late 1870s in workers congresses. Chose feminism over socialism after the 1880s. Her feminism influenced many socialist leaders, including Jules Guesde and Henri Ghesquière.

H. Carette. Textile worker. Founded (with Adolphe Lepers) the Roubaix POF. Edited Le Forçat until imprisoned in 1882 - in the same year, was elected to the Roubaix municipal council. Led the Roubaix textile syndicat from 1890 to 1892. Elected mayor in 1892. Left POF in 1902.

Mme Carette. Little is known about her except that she founded the Roubaix Comité des femmes and was an active POF member and feminist throughout the 1890s. She helped run the 'Brasserie sociale', the estaminet opened by her husband in 1882.

Gustave Delory. Textile worker, who with Gustave Jonquet founded one of the first textile workers' syndicats in the Lille area, in 1879. Edited Le Forçat from 1882-1883. Supported by his wife - also a textile worker - during the period when his Parti ouvrier activities prevented his finding employment. In 1889 he was appointed director of the POF printing company. Elected mayor of Lille in 1896 and 1900,

the *député* in 1902. Was a militant Guesdist until his death in 1925.

Henri Ghesquière. Textile worker, from the age of 10. Went to night school, and when he received his *certificat des études*, he became a newspaper salesman. Was an early member of the Lille POF. Elected to the departmental council in 1895. Elected to the municipal council of Lille from 1896-1904. Edited *Réveil du Nord*. Supported during these years by his wife, who was a street merchant. Elected *député* in 1906, 1901 and 1914.

Jules Guesde. Born in 1845. Died in 1922. Founder of the *Parti ouvrier français*, the first properly marxist political party in France. Was an active supporter of women's rights from 1876 onwards. Represented Roubaix in the Chambre on and off beginning in the 1890s.

Paul Lafargue. Married to Marx's daughter Laura. Was, with Guesde, a founder of the POF. Represented Lille in the Chambre during the late 1890s and after.

Paule Mink (often misspelled Minck). Details of her life are sketchy, although she was one of the most active socialists from before the Commune until her death in 1901. Was a delegate to the Le Havre congrès in 1880, and to the Saint-Etienne congrès in the following year. In 1884 she attended the Roubaix

POF congrès. After 1893 she officially left the POF for the Blanquists. Throughout her adult life she was a militant feminist. Numerous speeches on women's rights in the Nord and elsewhere. Worked to organise ouvrières in the Midi particularly.

Madeleine Pelletier. The first woman psychiatrist in France. Was a militant feminist and Guesdist after unification in 1905. Wrote numerous books and pamphlets on women's rights. Attended SFIO congresses as a Guesdist, and raised women's issues repeatedly, though to little avail.

Victor Renard. Textile worker. In 1881 became a socialist. Was a local POF official in Formies in 1892. In 1894 he moved to Roubaix. After 1903 was secretary to the national textile federation until his death in 1914.

Elisabeth Renaud. One of the founders - in 1889 - of the Groupe féministe-socialiste in Paris. Followed various occupations, including domestic service.

Leonie Rouzade. Was both a socialist and a feminist from the late 1870s onward. Like Auclert, she chose to emphasise feminism. In the 1880s and 90s she was a frequent speaker at POF meetings in the Lille area.

Louise Saumoneau. With Renaud, a founder of the GFS. Unlike Renaud, she accepted the SFIO's decision to

reject the GFS (in 1905-06), though she dropped from sight from 1906 to 1913. In that year she founded the Groupe des femmes socialistes. After the socialists split at Tours in 1920 (into the communists and socialists) she remained with the socialists of the SFIO.

Aline Valette. An active Guesdist from 1889, and an active feminist after that. Was the only woman on the POF's national council. She died of tuberculosis in 1899.

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PREFACE

This dissertation is based upon research in a variety of sources, most of them primary. These include official archival documents (unprinted), government documents and reports (printed), the congress reports and other publications of the French socialist and trade union organisations, newspapers (daily, weekly and periodical) of the period, contemporary literature, pamphlets and memoirs. None of the eleven chapters is based on anything other than an original study of these sources, and secondary literature is for the most part included only for historiographical reference or comparison. Where I have drawn on evidence provided by the secondary literature, this is explicitly stated in the notes.

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration.

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INTRODUCTION

Amidst the various and proliferating theories of emancipation competing for the loyalty of women in the present-day women's movement, one of the most compelling - and longest-lived - is socialist-feminism. This doctrine, however, poses two serious problems: how can it be demonstrated that marxism, a theory of class liberation, addressed itself to the emancipation of a non-class-specific sexual category, and what claims do the political parties of the marxian Left have on the organisational loyalties of non-proletarian women?

The latter problem, of course, has serious implications only in those countries with mass-based left-wing parties. In France, both the Parti Communiste and the Parti Socialiste have mass constituencies, and both claim a historical tie to women's liberation movements grounded in marxist theory. Nevertheless, neither party can claim success in organising most French women, nor even in creating plausible theoretical links between socialism and feminism.

The explanation for these failures lies in socialist-feminism's historical origins. It is too readily assumed that a 'natural' link exists, and has always existed, between women and the political left; logical and practical problems encountered in attempts to deploy marxist theory on the subject of women's

oppression have been dismissed out of hand as irrelevant, or solved in a flurry of verbal prestidigitation worthy of the very best left-wing magicians. And always the unexamined conviction that, whatever the difficulties, only marxist parties have historically supported women's liberation movements underlays all such socialist-feminist activity.

Yet the fact remains that the marriage of socialism and feminism is a troubled one. It is in an effort to explain and clarify this that the present thesis examines the formation and development of the political ideology of 'socialist-feminism' in France in the years 1880-1914.

The structure of the thesis is grounded in my belief that the reconstruction of the origins of a particular political doctrine requires a careful grounding in empirical data, lest the constituent ideas of that doctrine become detached from the social milieux in which they developed. Therefore, this study focusses on one large female industrial workforce - the textile workers of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing - and their relations with the growing French socialist movement, embodied first in the Guesdist Parti Ouvrier Français (POF), then, following the unification of 1905, in the Parti Socialiste (SFIO).

The opening section consists of a detailed, step-by-step account of the social data of these ouvrières'

lives. It is designed to establish, as completely as possible, the context in which women workers' political activities occurred, and their attitudes - and attitudes about them - developed. Such a recreation of the social context of this study also helps delineate those factors which limited female workers' political and economic options.

A reconstruction of this kind is particularly important when writing the history of women, since it is neither possible nor desirable to attempt a grounding of such political doctrines as pertained to women in their organisational context alone. Women rarely played a substantial role in mass workers' movements or political parties; thus to rely on data about such organisations in writing the history of a doctrine which specifically concerned such women would be to overlook the true constituency of the doctrine itself.

The opening chapters, then, provide the necessary introduction to the central theme of the thesis: the historical emergence of a socialist response to the particular problems posed by a growing female proletariat. From what comprises a rather static description of context, the thesis then turns to a more dynamic account of the interrelationships among working women, the practice of a mass political movement, and the theoretical responses which emerged from the interaction of the two. My central hypothesis is that working women were more

than the passive reflections of socialist theories of female liberation, or of opportunistic socialist attempts to organise them into a political movement for which they constituted only a peripheral constituency.

Instead, I am arguing that women responded to their social and economic circumstances in ways that reflected their awareness both of their special interests as female workers, and their concerns as members of the growing French working class. The dissertation is organised in such a way as to address these concerns in the most logical manner possible. From an empirical account of a hitherto invisible labour force, it proceeds to describe and analyse first the economic and political behaviour and attitudes of women textile workers, their organisations, strikes, and participation in small political activities, and how these changed over time; and second, the development by socialists, interacting on a day-to-day basis with a female constituency, of a practical and theoretical response to the problem of women's particular liberation within the larger workers' movement.

Because of the nature of its theme, the opening chapters of the thesis constitute something more than a straightforward description of a social context. The study of women in the past presents unique problems. These suggest that the neglect of women by historians of male workers has not been gratuitous. Women comprise

something more than just another inarticulate group, whose lives and ideas may be re-created via the usual methods of labour or social history. In other words, data about women are extraordinarily difficult to find. Working women rarely joined workers' organisations. They could not vote. They attended workers' meetings or congresses only infrequently, and then were mostly silent. Government reports, moreover, rarely differentiated between male and female workers, particularly in the early years of the Third Republic, when the women workers posed no noticeable threat within the larger labour movement itself. Police records of working-class political activities - plentiful in France in the period of the Second International - only occasionally noted the presence of women, and where they did usually lumped them together with children. The words of Arthur Young bear a double truth for historians of French working women. Thus,

> He who wishes to give a give account of such a kingdom as France must be indefatigable in the search of materials; for let him collect with all the care possible, yet when he comes to sit down coolly to the examination and arrangement, will find that much has been put into his hands of no real consequence, and more, possibly that is absolutely useless.

In addition to such technical problems, historians of female workers face a double edged prejudice, regarding both the nature of industrial workers in general and the 'special nature' of women in particular; this

prejudice finds its way into the contemporary sources and commentaries on the one hand, but also reflects the political solipsisms which inform so much of historians' problematics.

Attitudes about workers in general are not particularly difficult to control for in the sources; bearing in mind the particular context of the early decades of the Third French Republic, the range of reactions to a growing - and increasingly organised - working class is not difficult to disentangle from the data available. Furthermore, it is possible for most historians to be reasonably straightforward regarding their own ideological presumptions with regard to this sort of labour/social history (which is not to say that they always succeed in being so). A much greater difficulty arises for those writing about women. Given the existence of the present-day women's movement, the historiography of the subject is loaded from the outset. Many stereotypical notions about women's place are implicit in the manner in which questions concerning women in the past are posed. This thesis attempts to rescue women workers in the past from at least two of the identities thus ascribed: one which makes them the passive victims of the past, the other which allocates to them a 'separate-but equal' sphere - the family - within which they are supposed to have exercised 'womanly power' - held to be different from (though analogous to) the power relations

among men in the 'outside' world. In rejecting both such notions, I am concomitantly denying the very idea of writing a history solely of women in the past. Rather, the emphasis is placed upon historical relationships between social groups, and their respective and competing ideas and ideological constructs.

With regard to the latter, the group of doctrines that has come to be called socialist-feminism was never so clear-cut as to be easily disentangled from other types of feminism at the turn of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, as a theory, its history fell into two distinct periods within the history of the French Left in these decades.

The first phase was characterised by a clearly marxist theory, which argued that women were proletarians and as such must follow the trajectory prescribed by marxists for the awakening of class consciousness and the self-determined struggle for emancipation. The special problems created by women workers' subordination within the family and in society were addressed as but one aspect of women's special struggle; the solutions would and could only come side by side with the emancipation of the class as a whole.

The most articulate spokesman for this view was Jules Guesde, the leader of the Parti Ouvrier Français, which quickly took control of the Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing area as the dominant socialist party, after the

movement's beginnings in the late 1870s. Because of this fact, local POF militants and leaders were, in the 1880s and 90s, committed to the emancipation of female proletarians, and specifically included them within local party activities. Initially, their policies had some success in attracting local women to socialism - success which resulted in local socialist-feminist groups and women's campaigns for social reforms, as well as in women's participation in POF-controlled *syndicats rouges*. Chapter 10 addresses itself to this period.

It was the second phase of socialist-feminism, however, which came to dominate within the French Left *after* World War One; this, as we shall see, makes *its* origins and history particularly important. It is also of some historiographical significance, as it underpins many social histories of European working women and has come to exercise a certain domination in our own reading of women's condition at this time. The dissertation accordingly addresses these present-day assumptions in passing, with the object of illustrating their shallow historical foundation. However, I am not addressing the development of the political theory of socialist-feminism and its consequences in general, or in other times and other places - in fact quite the contrary. The emphasis on a particular place and a particular period in this thesis is deliberate; only thus does the peculiarity and

character of a given doctrine emerge clearly.

The implications of this regional study thus remain open and largely unexplored. Notwithstanding this, I am arguing that during the Belle Epoque, in the Nord, the linking of theories of women's emancipation to would-be marxist accounts of the emancipation of the proletariat raises some subtle and consequential difficulties of a general nature - difficulties which continue to plague those who have attempted to revive that linkage.

CHAPTER 1

FRENCH FLANDERS

The handful of travellers who sought out the crowded, noisome nineteenth century textile cities of Lille, Roubaix, and Tourcoing, clustered in a densely-populated triangle close by the Belgian border, left bleak portraits of grimy red brick factories and teaming workers' slums. In Lille Adolphe Blanqui found workers' quartiers populated by 'a generation of pariahs, such as one could find in no other city of France'. A few decades later, another writer described Lille as "la ville triste", where 'tall, black factory chimneys rose above...a landscape without poetry, where one met, at each step, scenes of frightful misery...an inclement sky, dark waters, muddy streets'.[1]

Throughout the nineteenth century, an extraordinarily rapid population growth exacerbated the social ills of the three cities. Though the rest of France, by mid-century, had settled into a near zero population growth, Lille, Roubaix, and Tourcoing maintained high growth rates. Lille grew from 55,000 in 1816 to 203,491 by the mid-1880s. In roughly the same period, Roubaix expanded from a town of 12,187 to a major industrial center of 100,000. Tourcoing, slower than its neighbours, increased its population from 14,600 to 56,000.[2]

In the French context, though not in the context of other European industrial nations, these three cities had a staggering growth rate.[3] There were two causes: Belgian immigration and a high birth rate.

"Les Pots de Beurre" - the Belgians

The movement of Belgians across the French border did not begin in the nineteenth century. For generations, smuggling had been a popular occupation for both Belgians and French men and women; in fact, it continued to prove a lucrative economic alternative for many textile workers during periods of unemployment or strikes. However, during our period, the scale of the migration was new. Wages in the Belgian textile industry were low, and many Belgians sought industrial jobs in France, rather than in the Belgian textile industry. In the earlier years of our period, they tended to cross the border on a weekly, or even daily, basis, arriving with a week's provisions, including "pots de beurre", the name by which they became popularly known. At first, these transients took little part in the community life of the French workers, but gradually, perhaps inevitably, they began to settle permanently in the three cities, becoming an integral part of the textile workers' communities.[4] In 1889, a French law encouraged such foreigners to become French citizens, and many Belgians did so.

The precise numbers of Belgian workers in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing in our period are impossible to discover. Sources throughout the three decades with which we are concerned offer wildly varying estimates. However, numbers were substantial. One entire workers' quartier of Lille, Wazemmes, was popularly known as "la petite Belgique". In 1904, the Lille section of the Syndicat ouvrier textile estimated that 40% of the total textile workforce in Lille was Belgian. In the same year, the Conseil des prud'hommes of Tourcoing stated that two-thirds of the textile workforce of that city was Belgian, although only one-third lived permanently in France. And in Roubaix in 1904, the Chambre de Commerce estimated that between 35-40% of the roubaisien textile workers were Belgian, "most" of them living permanently in France.[5]

It is clear that the Belgians formed an essential part of the textile working class in the three cities; their close ties with Belgium guaranteed a certain Belgian cast to workers' organisational life in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing, as we shall see in the next section. Furthermore, they were often the scapegoats for workers' complaints about unemployment in the textile industry: thus they absorbed much of the hostility which might have been directed at female workers - who were often the victims of such anger elsewhere in France.[6]

French textile workers had two basic objections to the Belgian workers. First, the textile patronat welcomed them because their close family ties across the border provided a safety valve. They typically returned to Belgium during economic crisis periods, or even during strikes, thus thinning the numbers of potentially rebellious workers, as well as the number of people enrolled in the Bureaux de bienfaisance, receiving public assistance. Second, the Belgians provided a docile workforce - one that willingly accepted the worst jobs and the lowest wages. One Tourcoing magistrate told a parliamentary commission in 1904 that the textile owners "appreciated them" because they took inferior work "without a murmur".[7] In the 1930s the novelist Maxence van der Meersch corroborated this view. The Belgians, he wrote, "worked with that courageous patience of the labouring beast which characterises the race of Flemish workers".[8]

Population

The second reason for the extraordinary population growth was the birth rate.[9] In 1870, the rate in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing was 41.65/1000 - compared to only 25.9/1000 for France as a whole. (This birth rate was nearer those of Germany and England and Wales, which in 1870 were 38.5/1000 and 35.2/1000, respectively.)[10]

Although the birth rate in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing began to drop after 1870 - to 29/1000 between 1886 and 1891, and to 25.20 per 1000 in 1908 - these three cities, like the Nord department as a whole, were among the most rapidly growing areas of France.[11] The last census before the war, taken in 1911, recorded 217,807 Lillois, 122,700 Roubaisiens, and 82,600 Tourquenois.[12] Much of this swelling population worked in the major industry of these three cities: textiles. While workers in Lille could find work outside the textile industry - the city was the administrative capital of the Nord department, as well as a military garrison city and a commercial center - those in Roubaix and Tourcoing had almost no options outside of entering the great textile mills.

Before estimating the numbers of textile workers in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing between 1880 and 1914, a serious caveat is in order. As more than one historian of France has noted, French government statistics throughout the period 1880-1914 are both unreliable and contradictory.[13] The early Third Republic had no efficient methods for gathering statistical material. Inquiries sent to prefects were often casually sent on to mayors, without any accompanying instructions as to sources or methods. Sometimes, for example, mayors asked the patronat to supply data on workers.[14] Alternative sources

included chambres de commerce (still the patronat) or conseils des prud'hommes. No controls were imposed on the sources. More than once, prefectoral reports lacked some of the requested information, but the Third Republic simply collated raw material, and published it. Unofficial sources thus understandably contradicted official printed statistics.[15]

The working class press of the period frequently printed statistics for the textile industry of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing, and these offered some check on government numbers. However, its figures tended to be extremely high - a result, no doubt, of the propagandistic nature of the argument which they supported.[16]

Even a detailed parliamentary inquiry into the French textile industry in 1904 failed to elicit consistent figures for the numbers of men and women working in textiles in the three cities. Most of the witnesses called before the commission - including both patrons and workers - testified to the immense fluidity of the industry, which made estimates of the actual workforce difficult, if not impossible.[17]

This caveat concerning reliance on French statistics applies throught the dissertation. More importantly, it poses some serious problems for the historiography of nineteenth century France, much of which depends heavily on statistical analyses.[18] Although this historiographical issue is clearly of some importance, however, it remains outside the precise scope of this thesis, and is addressed

only implicitly throughout. (Readers interested in the whole question of the use of quantitative methods in French social history are directed to the works of Judt and Perrot, cited in note 13 supra.)

With a clear awareness of the difficulties involved, it is possible to estimate the numbers of textile workers who are the subjects of this dissertation. In 1882, the prefect of the Nord reported that there were 7,385 adult (i.e. over 18) women working in textiles in Lille, 4,958 in Roubaix, and 4,160 in Tourcoing.[19] (These figures are probably low, since they fail to account for unemployed textile workers in a year of serious economic slump.) Assuming that the ratio of men to women was about the same as in 1896 (for which figures for both sexes are available) - i.e. 1.8 men for every woman - there were at least 30,000 adults working in the textile industry of the three cities at the beginning of our period.

By 1896, the government reported 81,710 textile workers in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing, of whom 29,395 were women.[20] Factories in the suburbs of Lille added an additional 30,596 men, and 20,518 women, swelling the total textile workforce in the area to 132,824.[21]

The workforce continued to grow throughout the years before the First World War. By 1904 there were at least 128,459 textile workers in the cities of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing (numbers for Lille's suburbs are unavailable for that year), of whom about 38,119 were women.[22] At

the end of our period, only one source - the syndicalist journal Bataille Syndicaliste - offered figures for the textile workforce. It reported in 1914 that Lille employed 50,000 women workers.[23] It is highly unlikely that this figure is accurate. Stagnation in the textile industry, which had begun in the Second Empire, had only begun to change in 1911, as we shall see. Furthermore, there is no evidence that women had begun to replace male workers to any great extent after 1904. Between 1896 and 1904, in fact, the proportion of women to men dropped. Thus while women were 36% of the textile workforce in 1896, they were only about 29% in 1904. This drop may have been due to the 1892 law limiting women's hours to 10½. Many employers preferred to use male workers, who were allowed to work 12 hours.

The reporter for Bataille Syndicaliste may have included the textile workforce of Lille's suburban areas, which in 1896 was larger than the female workforce of Lille proper (20,518 in the suburbs to only 8,297 in the city).[24] If so, and if the proportion of women workers in the city to those in the suburbs was the same as in 1896, then there were about 20,000 women working in Lille proper in 1914. Further, if the ratios of women in Roubaix and Tourcoing to those in Lille was the same as in 1896, then there were about 31,000 women working in Roubaix and 19,000 in Tourcoing, for a total of 70,000 female workers. Finally, if women were still

about 29% of the total workforce in textiles, then there were about 241,500 male and female textile workers in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing in 1914, or 57% of the total population of 423,107.

Women textile workers were about 17% of this total. Furthermore, thousands of girls - who began factory work between the ages of 10 and 13 - swelled the female workforce of the textile factories of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing. Typically, these girls remained in the factories until one of the three things forced them out: ill health, a debilitating factory accident, or the presence of too many children at home.

Housing and Community in Lille, Roubaix, and Tourcoing

The growing number of textile workers in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing was part of a massive housing problem which afflicted the three rapidly expanding cities from early in the nineteenth century. And because the women textile workers had two workplaces - the foyer and the factory - they were, perhaps, more affected by the miserable, crowded living conditions which the three cities offered in their workers' quartiers. We shall turn, then, to a discussion of women's second workplace - the homes of the cities' working classes.

Although the newer cities of Roubaix and Tourcoing, which had no crowded, confined city centers comparable to

that of Lille, had a better opportunity to assimilate their rapidly expanding working population, they did not succeed. Perhaps Pierre Sorlin is correct in explaining that the failure of all three textile cities to provide any adequate workers' housing was a result of the unassimilable social changes which occurred so rapidly in the nineteenth century that they left the bourgeoisie stunned, unable to react.[25] Whatever the explanation, however, misery was widespread in the workers' quartiers of all three cities. The thirty-four years before the First War brought no amelioration of the shocking housing conditions either; quartiers only grew more and more crowded as the years passed.

Lille's oldest working class district, Saint-Sauveur, had gained notoriety early in the century for the cellar dwellings where families lived below ground in a single dark, damp room with a trap door opening onto the street to let in light in the day and to retain heat during the night. These infamous "caves", which had so appalled Victor Hugo, had not vanished by the end of the century. Two shocked visitors found caves still housing many Lillois workers in the opening years othe the twentieth century.[26] In addition, many of the old multi-roomed homes of Saint-Sauveur - never particularly appealing dwellings even when new - were subdivided into hundreds of single room dwellings into which many more workers crowded.

Outside vieux Lille (as the city center was called), a number of workers' districts housed several thousand more workers. In 1881, the south-west canton of the city, which included the workers' quartiers of Wazemmes, Moulins-Lille, Fives and Esquermes, housed more people than the other four cantons of the city combined. More than 50,000 workers lived in Wazemmes, 19,819 in Moulins-Lille, 10,952 in Esquermes, and 21,247 in Fives.[27] Most of these workers, like those in Saint-Sauveur (save those living in cellars) lived in terraced houses, and few families enjoyed more than two rooms. Streets in workers' quartiers were unpaved and narrow - sometimes so narrow that sunlight penetrated the street for only a few hours a day.[28] Sewage and rain water ran in the streets, and mud was a constant fact of life.

Roubaix's answer to the housing problem was the infamous courée, which first appeared in mid-century and quickly spread to neighbouring Tourcoing. Later, Lille speculators caught on to their advantages and a few began to appear in Lille's outlying workers' districts by the 1890s.[29]

No detailed contemporary descriptions of the courées survive. However, because many courées still exist in the three cities (in Wazemmes, in 1971, there were still seventy pre-1914 courées standing - occupied by 353 families with 1,003 people),[30] the dimensions of some courée homes are available. In Roubaix in 1971 a

typical courée family lived in "2 up, 2 down". Each of these lodgings had an 18 foot facade. Inside, the two ground floor rooms measured 8½ feet by 11 feet, and 9½ feet by 13½ feet. The two upstairs rooms had the same dimensions, though the ceiling was lower - just over 5½ feet high. The low ceilings meant that these were usually sleeping lofts. In addition to the luxury of four rooms per hamily, this courée offered two narrow exits, one at each end. The entire courée was about 237 feet long.[31]

After 1880, the courées began to be built in longer squares, with workers' dwellings back to back. The rapid growth in the worker population increased the number of courées built. In 1891, Roubaix had 156 courées, housing 16,109 people (an average of 103 people per courée). By 1896, there were 205, in 1904, 1,050, and by 1912, 1,524 (housing at least 156,972 people). Many of them stood lined up along Roubaix's infamous via dolorosa, la rue des Longues Haies. In 1914 this one street alone had forty densely-crowded courées, with 10,000 inhabitants (or 250 people per courée). There are no exact figures for the number of courées in Tourcoing, though it is clear from contemporaries' comments that they existed in their hundreds. Lille was a bit slower to follow suit, but by 1911 had 882 courées, the majority of them in the five workers' districts of the city's south-west.[32]

Conditions in the courées varied from place to place. However, crowding was the salient feature of working class life everywhere in the three cities. In 1911, for example, 32,442 Lillois lived in homes with less than one-quarter of a room per person. A further 69,925 lived in lodgings where each person enjoyed "more than one-half but less than 1" room. In Roubaix, 4,288 people lived in less than a quarter of a room, and 29,555 in just over one half. If one notes that the survey counted as a "room" any space large enough for one person to lie down, the density appears even more grim.[33]

The courées and workers' slums of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing were, as we shall see, hothouses for disease. Further, all life in the courée was communal - no privacy was possible, and families shared the noise, the odours, the filth produced by hundreds of people living in such close proximity. The courtyards were unpaved, and sanitation nonexistent. All observers who visited the workers' quartiers during our period echoed the horror expressed by Blanqui and Hugo many decades earlier. The most commonly used adjective in their reports was "nauséabonde".

The bleak facts, however, do not tell all of the story of working class life. Relief from such conditions was ever-present in the estaminets which stood near

almost every courée. In these, whole families found warmth, comradeship, and the gin or beer they believed washed the deadly textile dust from their lungs. Furthermore, the courée itself was home - and while its close quarters and airless, dark, damp atmosphere produced illness and squalor, it also offered to many families friendship, help in bad times, and moral support. The Flemish novelist, Maxence van der Meersch, who grew up in a Roubaix courée in the shadow of a great wool mill, has left vivid accounts of life in courées, including these feelings attributed to a young women:

> She looked now at the cour, her cour. Two rows of low houses faced each other, six on each side. White-washed, with tarred foundations, they looked uniform, identically filthy, decayed, and rickety, to the eyes of a stranger. But Laure had always known them...and familiarity had made them each unique in her eyes...A dense web of wires hung across the courée, 5½ feet above the ground, like closely-woven cloth. Saturday's wash hung there, a display of poor, multi-colored clothes, blowing in the wind. 34

Notwithstanding the sense of community provided by the courée, life in these textile cities' slums was a constant challenge, particularly for the women. For they were - in the words of many contemporaries - twice enslaved: once to the textile patron, once to their families. And it was in these grim workers' dwellings that working women struggled to maintain their families. Here they gave birth, fed and rocked their children, and sometimes watched them die. In the midst of the

constant mud and detritus of courée life, they struggled to create at least a semblance of order and cleanliness. More than one observer testified to the often pitiful attempts of these women to fulfill what they - and most of their husbands and fathers - viewed as women's domestic duties in the few hours between the factory whistle and exhausted sleep.

Even Sunday - prescribed as a day of rest by 1892 factory legislation - found few working women or their daughters resting. In 1907, one sympathetic woman work inspector, Caroline Milhaud, described women textile workers' "free" Sundays in these words:

> In effect, Sunday's work stoppage permits the man and the child to enjoy a prolonged sleep on Sunday morning, and gives them leisure to get exercise, to go for walks, and to entertain themselves for the rest of the day. It is not the same for the mother or for the girls. It is necessary to put in order all the household work which was neglected the rest of the week because there had not been time for it: there's the washing to do, general housecleaning, repair of husband's and children's clothes. When all this is finished, the 'day of rest' has passed. 35

* * *

The fact that women textile workers did "double toil" has often been advanced to explain what has been little more than an historically unexamined assumption - that women were indifferent to the external, - and by default, male - world of unions and political organisations. A concomitant assumption has been that women often "escaped" the factory by marriage or at least by motherhood. Married women of the working classes have often

been portrayed as primarily "ménagères" who, by a long-held stereotypical definition, were automatically uninterested in matters not relating directly to their homes and families.

However, it is the argument of this thesis that the women who produced the textiles of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing were far from politically or economically quiescent. At the same time, however, it is clear that working women's lives were, in many crucial ways, more complex than those of their male counterparts. Constant child bearing taxed their bodies, and the small, dark, decrepit world of the courées narrowed their mental horizons.

It is logical to begin an account of the behaviour and opinions of these women with the details of their lives - their marriages, children, illnesses, deaths, and the ways in which they, like van der Meersch's heroine, Laure, managed to make life where the possibilities for it seemed so grim.

CHAPTER 2

THE LIVES OF TEXTILE WORKERS

Life Expectancy

"If a boy or a girl is employed in textile spinning from a young age, he or she will die, usually before 45." Thus did Albert Aftalion, a professor at the University of Lille in 1903, baldly estimate the life span of so many textile workers. This age limit - shocking to most twentieth century eyes - appeared optimistically high to many of Aftalion's contemporaries. The textile triangle of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing was, to one writer, the "capital of death"; there, most male textile workers could expect to live until 40, but women only until 35.[1] Another noted in 1903 that women who worked in the carding rooms of flax spinning mills from the age of 17 or 18 (a rather late entry age in the Lille mills) would, like their British counterparts, begin to deteriorate by 30, and would die by 45.[2]

Women aged quickly in the textile mills of the Nord. One shocked visitor wrote:

> In the cities of the Nord, at the doors of spinning and weaving mills, one can see puny, thin, deformed bodies, pale skin, sunken eyes, hollow cheeks, bloodless lips; the women are old before they are young; misery and consumption stalk them, taking them toward the death that awaits them in a street corner, where a fatal wind blows, or even in their miserable slums, without air, without meat, without cheer.[3]

The two Bonneff brothers were equally shocked when introduced to one woman textile worker in Lille. When their guide asked them, sotto voce, how old they thought her, they replied, "Forty-five to fifty". "She is twenty-six", their guide told them.[4]

A study carried out by the Lille tuberculosis hospital - the Preventorium Emile Roux - confirmed these estimates of textile workers' short life-expectancy. The director of the preventorium, Dr. Verhaeghe, told the Bonneff brothers that although all textile workers suffered from some form of respiratory illness, the rate dropped dramatically among workers over 50. Why? Because most textile workers were dead before 50 - in fact, the doctor added, most died much earlier than that; usually between 25 and 35 they contracted their fatal illness.[5]

Such grim facts about the brevity of life for most women textile workers in the Nord are more than simply additions to our catalogue of workers' miseries in the Belle Epoque. As this dissertation concerns the absence of ouvrières from local political organisations, it is crucial to note that at least part of the explanation lies in these early mortality rates. There was, furthermore, - and more devastating to the work of organising women workers, as we shall see in the next section - the fact that few women textile workers reached an age where both their own maturity and the ages of their oldest

daughters, who normally began to share some domestic duties as soon as they were old enough, might have allowed them the time to work as political militants (i.e., at about 30 or 35).

Militants could, of course, in principle have been drawn from the ranks of married women whose marriages provided an escape from the factory. However, more women textile workers in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing remained in the factories after marriage than left.

This statement at first appears unproblematic: after all, Engels had bemoaned the "death of the working class family" which he attributed to the very high number of married women textile factory workers he found in Lancashire in the 1830s.[6] Many historians, however, have rested arguments as to the political and economic quiescence of working women on the assumption that most left the factories upon marrying, and thus became preoccupied with familial concerns to the detriment of working class struggles. Thus Eric Hobsbawn has written:

> Nineteenth century industiralisation...tended to make marriage and the family the major career of the working class woman who was not obliged by sheer poverty to take other work.... Once married, she belonged to the proletariat not as a worker but as the wife, mother and housekeeper of workers.[7]

This dissertation argues directly against that view; thus it is important to establish, in so far as possible, whether or not marriage tended to release working women in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing from the factories.

Marriage and the Female Worker

There are two kinds of data for such an analysis: quantitative data - to which the caveat outlined earlier applies - and qualitative data. Despite the problems of the former, we shall begin with it, stressing at each point the necessarily tentative nature of our conclusions. Data used is for the department of the Nord as a whole. Specific data for Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing have not been gathered (nor could it be in the case of Lille, due to a fire in 1903, which destroyed the local archives).

In the Nord as a whole in 1901, 36.8% of the total female population (aged 0 to 100) either was or had been married. What is remarkable is that the comparable percentage of married women among industrial ouvrières was only very slightly less (33.6%). If marriage were taken to presume the likely departure from the workforce, it should follow that single ouvrières, upon marrying, left the factories in droves. The age of marriage for French women as a whole in 1901 was predominantly between 20 and 24. Of all married French women, 62.48% had married by the age of 25. Assuming that industrial ouvrières married at about the same age as women in general, we should see a sharp drop in their numbers after the age of 25. In fact, however, the sharpest drop comes by or before the age of 20 (43.1% of all industrial

ouvrières in the Nord were 19 or younger). Clearly one could hypothesise that these women married very young indeed; but in that case we have to face the converse problem, which is that 57% of all ouvrières in the Nord were over 20 (and by extension, for the most part, married).

Thus, either local working women married young, and dropped out in droves - in which case we would need to assume that a very large number never married (and there is no evidence to support this) or, assuming that most ouvrières, like other French women, married in their early to mid-twenties, and had stayed on in the factory until then, they appear in large part to have remained at work thereafter.

The rate of fall-out from the ages of 20 to 65 is remarkably steady, except for a sharp fall in the numbers of women at work in their forties relative to those working in their thirties. This fact confirms the low life expectancy posited by several contemporaries. Women who survived into their forties (married or otherwise) appear to have worked steadily until they died - the smallest decline in ouvrières is registered between the cohorts 40-49 and 50-59.

It should be stressed again that these figures are indicative, not conclusive: we shall never know exactly how many married ouvrières there were in each age category, and must therefore make assumptions regarding such figures with caution.[8]

Most qualitative evidence supports the statistical likelihood that a relatively small number of textile workers used marriage as an escape route out of the factory. Nor did motherhood prove such a pathway out. Instead, children only augmented what contemporaries called the "double toil", or "double enslavement" of women.

Married women's double responsibilities prescribed behaviour different from that of male workers. At the noon whistle, for example, while men - and some single women - rushed out of the factory gates toward the nearest estaminet, married women, or girls with younger siblings, hurried out to give waiting children their lunch. At the end of a woman's day, these same women found a second job awaiting them in the courées. A "dismal lot" awaited their return home from the mills, including, in the words of one witness, a husband already drunk, preparing to go off to his "local" while she performed her nightly domestic duties - tidying the home, washing the children, preparing supper, doing the wash, mending clothes. Some women finished these tasks quickly, and took their children to join their husbands for a drink before they all returned home to eat. [9]

The parliamentary commission of 1904 took the fact of married women's factory labour for granted. They consistently asked witnesses not whether married women were working but instead, how long women worked before giving birth, and how soon most women returned to the

mills afterwards. The witnesses concurred in their answers: women worked up until the last minute before giving birth - occasionally having their babies in the factories - and returned to work as soon as they were able (generally between one and three weeks after the birth). No witness made any mention of women quitting work because of marriage or motherhood.[10]

The final and most compelling support for the view that most married women textile workers stayed on in the factories was the fact that few families could have survived without the wages of all members who could work. Large families exacerbated the problems of extremely low - even dropping - wages, and rising prices.[11]

This vexed issue of whether or not working class women continued to work after marriage raises a second question: is it reasonable to assume that those women who did leave the factories after marriage necessarily became non-political? This issue will be addressed in some detail in the next section of this thesis. However, it is important to note here that this connection between women's non-participation in factory labour and a consequent lack of interest in unions or politics has frequently resulted in historiographical neglect of women's actual behaviour and attitudes. The conclusions thus reached remain conjectural - though conjecture often supported by the prejudices both of turn of the century source and modern writer.[12]

Birth and Death

Such contemporary prejudices about "women's place" were less problematic for textile ouvrières than the difficulties of their daily existence. And these were compounded by constant pregnancy and childbearing.

The working people of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing in the Belle Epoque upheld the stereotype of prolific flamandes and produced large families throughout our period. As we have seen, the birth rate dropped slightly after 1870 (from 41.65/1000 to 29/1000 in the late 1880s), but remained high enough to make the Lille arrondissement (which included the three cities plus some outlying areas) the most populous in France at the end of the century.[13] The majority of that population - 65% - belonged to the class of ouvriers.[14]

Average family size among textile workers was high relative to the rest of France.[15] In the 1880s, estimates of average numbers of textile workers' children ranged from four to six per family (these figures included only living children).[16]

The average number of children in textile families showed little change during our period. A few years before the war, one observer noted that women textile workers were "almost constantly pregnant". Of a sample of 970 textile families in Lille in that year, 872 (or 89.9%) had children, with an average of four per family

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(a total of 3,488 children). Many of the families, however, had more than four children. This survey found many families with five to ten children, and some with eleven to twenty.[17]

The number of living children did not reflect the number of times women gave brith, however. Infant mortality was appallingly high in the working quartiers of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing in our period. For new-born infants, these textile cities earned the commonly-applied epithet "foyers de la mort". Statistics were grim. Among textile workers in Lille in 1898 (where there were more than 8,297 textile ouvrières), 381/1000 children under the age of two died. In 1899, the number grew to 401/1000.[18] By 1900, Lille headed the list of large French cities with high infant mortality rates; out of every 1000 deaths in Lille in that year, 295 were children under a year old.[19]

More poignant than the bare figures[20] were the words of Nord textile workers themselves. In 1890, the socialist militant, Aline Valette, was told by a Lille worker:

> My wife has had 12 children. She worked 8 years on the night shift in carding factories. The 7 children born during that period are dead. Since then, she has worked selling newspapers; the 5 children that she has brought into the world in that time are living.[21]

Shocked by the high infant mortality rate among textile workers in the Nord, Jean Jaurès, a member of the 1904 parliamentary commission, gently asked four Armentières workers if they had lost any children. The oldest replied, "I've lost 4; 4 remain to me". The others added, in turn, "I've lost 2 of 3", "I lost mine at 20 months", and "I've lost 1 of 2". The oldest child to die, they told Jaurès, was two years old. [22]

Shocking as these figures were, the fact was that infant mortality was lower in Armentières than in Roubaix, Tourcoing and Lille. In 1904 in those cities, one commissioner reported, the rate was 19-20% (or at least 190-200/1000, compared to 144/1000 in France as a whole). [23]

One need not search far to discover the causes of infant mortality among workers. Women typically worked in the factories up until the last moment before giving birth, and then usually gave brith at home - in the courée, where cleanliness was at a premium. These women of the cities' slums even lacked midwives; instead, they were attended by neighbours, or local "sage-femmes", some of whom, like Dame Victoire of Saint-Sauveur, became well-known folk-heroines among grateful women in the courées of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing. [24]

Shortly after giving birth (usually in five to ten days), women returned to the factories, leaving their children with a neighbour (perhaps a woman too ill

to go out to work), or, if they were lucky, with an elderly relative. No breast feeding was possible under these circumstances, though throughout our period reformers demanded that factory rooms be set aside for the purpose, and that women textile workers be given sufficient time during the day to nurse infants, but to no avail.[25]

The high birth rate in the workers' quartiers of these textile cities meant that women workers were almost constantly pregnant throughout their fertile years. Knowledge about methods of contraception was apparently almost non-existent until early in the twentieth century, when one textile union leader told the parliamentary commission that workers in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing practiced "continence" in order to limit family size.[26]

The almost total silence of sources on the issue of birth control among textile workers means that explanatory hypotheses must remain little more than plausible speculation. Historians have posited several explanations for the continuing high birth rate among textile workers in the Nord.[27] Though none seems entirely satisfactory, it may be plausible to assume that simple ignorance was the primary cause of the high birth rate.[28] As on other matters, it was extremely rare for women's attitudes on this issue to be recorded. Police and prefectoral

reports rarely mentioned women at all, in fact, and women's particular demands, which might have revealed attitudes, vanished. Socialists' attempts to organise women's groups in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing were based on beliefs about women workers' special interests as mothers; however, there is at least the suggestion that some ouvrières took pride in this role. Socialist women textile workers, for example, were expected to have more interest in scholars' cantines in the public schools, and more interest in the free distribution of clothing by socialist municipalities in Roubaix and Lille in the 1890s than men. It was thus as mothers, rather than as workers, that many women were organised into socialist women's groups.[29] The issue of controlling motherhood was apparently never raised among these organised women. Nor did the national Groupe des femmes socialistes ever engage the issue in its journal, La Femme Socialiste (which was founded in 1901, and lasted throughout the pre-war period).[30]

In general, then, it is fair to hypothesize that women textile workers of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing probably remained ignorant of effective methods of contraception throughout the pre-war years.[31] Constant child-bearing, which sapped their already meagre strength, constituted one important limitation on their ability to take part in political or union activities.[32]

Health

In addition to the diseases related to maternity - which included puerpural fever, prolapsed uteruses, and general debilitation - women textile workers shared in all the maladies common to both sexes in the textile workers' quartiers of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing. It is, of course, impossible to separate those illnesses contracted as a result of life in the courées and slums from those linked to work in spinning and weaving mills. However, because this section addresses the private - rather than working - lives of women textile workers, I have somewhat artificially separated diseases among textile workers from those factors which produced and exacerbated them in the textile mills. (These will be described in the section on work conditions.)

The major killer of textile workers was, as one might expect, lung disease, especially tuberculosis. Its ravages cut a large swath through the courées of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing; moreover, the attitude of fatality engendered by the disease constituted a realistic assessment of any stricken workers' chances of surviving it.

When Léon and Maurice Bonneff visited one victim, they found her in the open doorway of her tiny home, on her knees, attempting to scrub the doorstep. They wrote,

> She was thin and pretty. She got up, smiling, wiping her hands on the sacking tied around her

> waist as an apron, and called to her children, who were crawling around in the courée mud, or on the floor of the small room, all nearly naked. Inside the one room dwelling, there were 1 bed and 1 small cradle. Eight people inhabited that room. The woman, who was 30, had borne one more child, who had died of tubercular meningitis. The father was at work in a weaving factory, where the woman also used to work. Dr. Verhaeghe (of the Preventorium Emile Roux) had told us that this woman was in the early stages of the disease, and could be saved if she got adequate food, air, and so on. But if she remained in the courée, she would die.[33]

Dr. Verhaeghe's study of 1,065 textile workers in Lille - all of whom were unusual in so far as they had actually visited the Preventorium voluntarily, showed that 68% had chronic respiratory disease, including tuberculosis. From this sample, the doctor concluded that just over one-fourth of all textile workers had "chronic bronchitis". Further, he said that a "huge" number of workers between 25 and 35 were forced to leave the textile factories because they could not breathe well enough to work. He also interviewed 25 widowers in Lille, whose wives had been textile workers. Of these, 19 had watched their wives die of tuberculosis.[34] If one member of a family - crowded as they were - contracted tuberculosis, the rest were more than likely to fall ill as well. And the tragedy of the Preventorium Emile Roux was that all it could do was diagnose: no treatment was possible under the circumstances, though the doctors made heroic attempts. Thus when one family member was diagnosed as tubercular, the home was

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disinfected, spittoons and paper handkerchiefs were provided, the family's linen and clothing were washed and boiled, and a bit of milk was given free to the consumptive each week. These rudimentary measures probably did halt the spread of tuberculosis in some families; but they did little more than postpone the inevitable death of the patient.

Textile workers were aware of the slow march of death once they began work in the mills. The textile syndicat told the parliamentary commission that workers feared the Preventorium, because workers knew that a diagnosis of tuberculosis was a death sentence. Thus most workers preferred not to know.[35]

A second scourge of the working population of the Nord was alcoholism, which was ironically tied in popular imagination to the lung problems of textile workers. Popular belief had it that alcohol chased the textile dust from the lungs.[36] Added to this folklore were the warmth and comradeship workers found in the local estaminet, and the fact that public house owners extended credit to textile workers who patronised them.

Perhaps because male workers typically stopped in for a few drinks after work - while their wives hurried home to see to the children and to supper - alcoholism was apparently more prevalent among male workers. Drunkenness was a common cause of fining and of firing from the factories, and the owners' descriptions of

alcohol abuse among the workforce never included any descriptions of women being fired or fined. The "semaine flamande" - which included a Monday holiday during which workers recovered from Sunday's drinking - was also apparently a male institution.

Alcoholism, in the words of one socialist observer, 'ravaged' the Nord. In 1914, in Roubaix alone, there were 2,000 estaminets for 110,000 inhabitants, most of them located in workers' quartiers. Socialist leaders complained that the patronat encouraged drinking in estaminets because it kept the workers dependent on credit, and thus tied to poor-paying jobs in the mills.[37] (This issue will be examined later, in a discussion of working conditions and wages, but it is questionable whether the patronat wanted drunken workers operating what were - even in the best of factories - complicated and dangerous machines.)[38]

Added to the depredations of tuberculosis, other lung diseases, diseases associated with constant maternity, and alcoholism were the inevitable results of life in unsanitary, crowded, wet and cold courées.[39] Given such a combination of conditions, survival beyond the ages of 35 to 45 was unlikely, at best. Furthermore, workers' scant diets did little to ameliorate the problems of ill-health. Typically, they lived on bread with a bit of lard, a few vegetables, potatoes, whey milk, coffee

diluted with chicory, and alcohol. Meat was rare, and according to most observers, usually went only to the male members of the family. Women commonly went without any special nourishment, even when pregnant or - and this was a rare occurrence - nursing infants.[40]

The Social World of Working Women

For the textile workers of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing then, there was no Belle Epoque. Their short grey lives were narrowly circumscribed by conditions which would seem to militate against much joy or pleasure - or much collective political or economic action. However, the workers of French Flanders did find pleasures in life. Many of their popular traditions, some stemming from the eighteenth century, were carefully preserved in fêtes, songs, games and popular theatricals. Women also enjoyed certain private traditions, expressed in poetry, stories, and lullabies which they shared with their children.

Before turning to a discussion of such public and private traditions, the background must be provided, beginning with a caveat prompted by the difficulties involved in attempting to draw a detailed portrait of working women's lives, given the scarcity of documentary material. Part of the reason for this dearth of sources was that most women textile workers were probably

illiterate, or semi-literate, particularly in the opening decades of our period. One historian has estimated that in 1870, a full 95% of the women of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing over 50 were unable to read or write (and probably 60% of the men).[41] Pierre Pierrard counted 40% of the population of Lille as illiterate at the end of the Second Empire, and 70% of the working class.[42] In 1880, the prefect reported that of all those under 20 in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing, scarcely one in three could read.[43]

The situation had probably changed slightly, by the first years of this century, though less so for girls than boys. In Lille in the 1880s, there were some free municipal schools, though the girls' school had places for only fifty girls.[44] Françoise Mayeur has argued that very few poor children received any real education, even after free primary education became more available in the late 1880s and 90s. Because their wages were essential to family survival, most textile children had to enter the factories at 12. As for secondary education, it was virtually unknown for workers' children.[45]

Working class children in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing had access to free primary schooling by the end of the 1880s, but most attended only sporadically, depending upon whether they were needed at home. Few probably gained more than the rudiments of reading and

writing. Girls doubtless received even less education than boys, as they were expected to take over domestic duties when the mother was ill, or when many small children had to be watched.

In addition to public lay schools, the three cities offered several Catholic schools which competed with the others for workers' children. The combination of lay and Catholic schools, therefore, doubtless had some impact on literacy levels among workers after 1890.[46] Workers' attitudes toward their children's educations also changed. Pierre Pierrard concluded that textile workers, especially Flemish workers, in Lille in the Second Empire were widely indifferent to their children's education.[47] This changed in our period, particular after 1900; the source of the change was the local educational activities of the socialist Parti ouvrier, as we shall see in the next section of this thesis.[48]

It is possible, therefore, that literacy among women textile workers was somewhat higher by the end of the period than in 1880. However, much of the evidence supports the view that literacy remained rudimentary, and this fact has several important consequences.

First, women workers left few, if any, written documents. Indeed, there are no letters to the workers' press that can be identified as written by women textile workers in the Nord, though some exist written by women textile workers elsewhere in France.[49] Secondly,

working women in the Nord rarely read popular serialised novels, or cheap paper novels, which were the characteristic entertainment of working women elsewhere. (In studies of other groups of female workers these have provided some material for an account of women's popular culture.)[50] Even as late as 1914, Marcelle Capy, a writer for Bataille Syndicalist, was struck by the fact that women in the textile mills of the Nord did not carry with them any reading material as they left the factory gates. She attributed this to the lassitude engendered by women's "hideous" work conditions, but it may have been the case that most of them simply could not read well enough to gain pleasure from it.[51]

Thirdly, because reading was a rare activity, pleasures tended to be oral, and more often collective. Poetry and songs were as much a part of Flemish workers' lives as food. Workers' musical associations flourished throughout our period[52] and every fête featured several singing groups and much collective singing. Even strikes produced their own songs, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Among the many songs popular in the workers' quartiers of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing, perhaps none was more familiar than the lullaby, "Le P'tit Quinquin", written in the 1850s by Lille's worker-poet, Alexandre Desrousseaux. More than one worker recalled his mother singing it to him as a child. Its words attested to

the difficult mixture of tenderness and pain which were the lot of working mothers in the Nord.

The lullaby tells of a young lace-maker, who has just put her infant son into his cradle, hoping that he will sleep and let her get on with her work. Quinquin refuses to cooperate, however. So she puts her work aside and takes him up. She sings to him that if he will sleep she will buy him toys and treats. When that offer fails, she tries two more: new clothes, and a trip to see the marionnettes. None of these produces the desired effect, so she ends by threatening him with a visit from St. Nicholas - the ogre feared by all bad children in Lille - which finally induces sleep. The song concludes tenderly:

> Dors min p'tet Quinquin
> m'in p'tit puchin, min gros rojin,
> Tu m'f'ras du chagrin
> Si tu n'dors pas qu'a d'main. 53

Poetry which reflected workers' lives abounded in the workers' press. Le Cri du Travailleur (Lille's socialist newspaper) printed "Pauvre Mère" in 1890. It began, "La nuit tombe, on est en décembre / on est sans bois, on est sans pain/ Au fond de la petite chambre/ un enfant fêle dit: 'J'ai faim'" So the poor mother, despairing because she had already pawned everything, dressed herself as well as she could in her pitiful rags, and went out onto the streets to try to sell herself in

the difficult mixture of tenderness and pain which were the lot of working mothers in the Nord.

The lullaby tells of a young lace-maker, who has just put her infant son into his cradle, hoping that he will sleep and let her get on with her work. Quinquin refuses to cooperate, however. So she puts her work aside and takes him up. She sings to him that if he will sleep she will buy him toys and treats. When that offer fails, she tries two more: new clothes, and a trip to see the marionnettes. None of these produces the desired effect, so she ends by threatening him with a visit from St. Nicholas - the ogre feared by all bad children in Lille - which finally induces sleep. The song concludes tenderly:

> Dors min p'tet Quinquin
> m'in p'tit puchin, min gros rojin,
> Tu m'f'ras du chagrin
> Si tu n'dors pas qu'a d'main. 53

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order to feed her child - a not unusual scenario in the workers' quartiers of the Nord.[54] Such poems and songs were often printed and handed out in crowds, particularly during strikes and political events.

There were other pleasures for textile workers in these cities. Many Sunday afternoons found families - including the women, who had either finished or neglected their domestic work - out in the courées enjoying an impropmptu fête. In 1914, in one Lille courée, a writer found such a spontaneous celebration with accordians, singing, marionette shows, and "girls with hair ribbons" at the local estaminet. Among the children little boys were showing off their "pitiful" muscles to the little girls, in a caricature of the prevalent relations between the sexes.[55]

Sunday evenings, those families that could afford it dressed up and went to the local "cinéma". There they listened to love songs, "sweet songs" which, according to one observer, told of their 'utopian dreams'. "Music hall melodies pierced their misery", the writer added.[56]

Other families gathered together in the local estaminets - to drink, to laugh, to gossip, and inevitably, to sing. Thus these Sunday evenings - the last night off before the long work week began again - provided some relief, and a chance to enjoy the famous Flemish love

of communal life. So loyal were the workers to each other and to their shared lives, in fact, that the chambre de commerce told the parliamentary commission in 1904 that it was no use building better workers' housing on the outskirts of the three cities; the workers would not leave their quartiers.[57]

This dissertation will not engage in a detailed study of the traditions and popular entertainments of the women workers of these cities. However, it is important to note that the communal orientation of most popular activities meant that women - as mothers, wives, daughters, and fellow workers and inhabitants of the courées - formed an integral part of the working class. They did not - the protestations of many historians to the contrary notwithstanding - occupy a separate sphere of individual homes and families, but instead joined in virtually all aspects of working class life. This fact was to have important consequences for the socialists when they came to organise this group of male and female textile workers in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing, and for the patronat, when they tried to break strikes by setting men and women against each other.

Some Patronal Responses

The misery of workers' lives in the Belle Epoque did not entirely escape the attention of the textile patronat

of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing. Some members of the textile families, along with other leading citizens, joined together in a variety of charitable organisations which attempted to address the needs of workers.

We shall not explore all the charitable organisations of the three cities. Such a study lies outside the scope of this work.[58] However, we shall sketch, briefly, those charitable institutions which pre-dated the socialist municipalities of Lille and Roubaix (the socialists won power in Roubaix first, in 1892, and then in Lille, in 1896) so that socialist reforms, which will be discussed in detail in the next section, can be seen in context.

The primary charitable institution in each city was the Bureau de Bienfaisance, headed by a relief committee chosen from among prominent citizens. It was to this Bureau that indigent workers applied for help. Unfortunately, in the years before socialists gained control of two of the municipalities, the bureaux had little impact. Thus, in 1895, in Lille, there were 32,000 indigents (classed as "deserving poor" by observers from the Bureau) enrolled on the welfare rolls. The city's budget for the Bureau in that year was 280,000 francs, or an average of 8.75 francs per person for the entire year![59] Of course rich patrons of the Bureau riased additional funds, but the bulk of the money came from the municipality.

When socialists attained a majority on the municipal councils of Roubaix and Lille they raised the amounts allotted to the *bureaux* and re-defined the term "deserving poor". Consequently the lists grew in both cities. By 1904, Roubaix's *Bureau de Bienfaisance* included 19,345 people - one out of every five residents. The socialists' inclusion of one of the city's most miserable groups, unwed mothers, obviously accounted for many of the newly-'deserving' poor.[60]

In addition to these relief *bureaux*, each city had a few non-religious *hospices* (in Lille, in 1895), there were seven such *hospices*, with 700 beds for the sick and wounded, and 2,090 for the old, the incurable, and orphans).[61] There were also a few city-run night refuges for the homeless, but these were opened only when winter was at its worst. Lille also had a few crèches - founded between 1871 and 1879 - run by nuns. These crèches (which were not free) were run by the same group who ran the *bureaux*, and thus the same rigid moral criteria were applied to mothers who wanted to use their services.[62]

The wives and daughters of the textile patronat played a special role in the charities of the three cities. They directed several charities aimed at the working women of the three textile cities.[63] Among the largest of these was the Société de charité maternelle, in Lille,

which provided money, a midwife's care, and a modest layette to new mothers. Of course the fitness of the mother to receive aid had to be verified by a visit by the committee in charge. They had three requirements which the prospective recipient of their charity had to meet: first, she had to obtain a certificate from the police attesting to her good character and morality; second, she had to have at least three living children under 14, or only two if she was unable to work, or one if the father was either totally disabled or dead; and third, she had to be married (and this meant within the Church). These rigorous requirements help to explain why only 1400 women were aided by this group in the 1880s, and only 1100 in the 1890s.[64]

Another organisation led by bourgeois women was la Mutualité maternelle, in Lille and Roubaix. Women workers were encouraged to join this maternity insurance group to which they regularly paid a small sum. When they gave birth, they received money and layetts. However, these groups, too, were unpopular. In 1908 there were only 334 members in Lille, and 402 in Roubaix.[65]

There were other charitable works sponsored by bourgeois women, including refuges, and groups organised within the factories for working women. These latter groups, discussed in detail below, were directed by nuns and priests as well as members of patronal families.

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As we shall see, these groups were no more successful in attracting the working women of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing than other charitable groups.

When one contemplates the enormous wealth being amassed by the textile owners in these three cities, one must agree with M. L'Abbé Talmy, who studied the reactions of the Nord textile patronat to Pope Leon XIII's 1891 encyclical Rerum novarum (an attempt inter alia to prescribe official moral standards for industrialists). M. L'Abbé concluded that most of the pious sentiments of the Catholic patronat were no more than that. Their collective attitutde was that they owed the workers nothing in this life but were only responsible for workers in the next. The 1878 charter of the Association des patrons chrétiens summed up their feelings:

> The worker is not a force that one utilises or rejects according only to the needs of production. He is our brother in Jesus Christ, given by God to the patrons who remain obligated to place him in the proper conditions to facilitate his eternal life. 66

While the textile patronat of Lille and Roubaix was generally indifferent to workers' misery, however, the Tourcoing patronat - smaller and more tightly organised - was slightly less so. The Nord prefect reported in 1880 that Tourcoing manufacturers were more conciliatory than their counterparts in Lille and Roubaix. They rarely reacted to industrial crises by lowering

wages, and when times were bad, they offered help to their workers.[67] This general impression of the Tourcoing patronat was supported by several witnesses at the 1904 parliamentary hearings.[68] This fact may prove helpful in explaining the rapid growth of socialism in Lille and Roubaix, and the difficulties encountered by the Parti ouvrier when it attempted to organise the workers of Tourcoing in our period.

Generally speaking, then, neither the textile patronat nor the Catholic Church had much effect on the misery shared by the textile workforce of these three cities. Their collective emphasis was never on ameliorating harsh conditions, either in the workers quartiers or in the factories, to which we now turn.

CHAPTER 3

THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY

In the last third of the nineteenth century, textiles lost their place as one of France's leading industries. By 1880, the situation in the Nord's major industry was grave. Small factories disappeared at an increasing rate, while the great textile families expanded, tightening their hold on the production of textiles in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing. Unfortunately, secrecy about production figures, profits and working conditions, always a characteristic of the tight, family-owned Nord textile industry, grew commensurately. Gathering industrial statistics became increasingly difficult for officials of the Third Republic. Most patronal replies to governmental inquiries were cryptic and unhelpful. A typical response was one patron's outline of the state of Lille textiles sent to the prefect: "Flax spinning, 1886: critical. Many workers unemployed. Manufacture of tulle, 1886; restrained".[1]

Given such elusiveness, it is not surprising that official documents throughout our period record a series of disagreements and contradictions.[2] In 1904, the parliamentary commission found the textile patronat totally obstinate. Lille owners told the commission that their total exports for the year had been "about

10% for spun flax, no cotton thread, and a little cotton cloth".[3] Their Roubaisien counterparts were even less helpful: they reported that they could not give any prices or changes in prices for the preceding twenty year period because the situation was "all too variable".[4] Thus any picture of the state of the industries in these three cities - which produced a major percentage of France's flax and linen, hemp, jute, cotton and wool - remains hazy.

It is clear, however, that in the last half of the nineteenth century, cotton relinquished its primary place in the Lille textile industry to the spinning and weaving of jute and flax. Cotton continued to be processed in Lille, as well as in Roubaix and Tourcoing, but the lingering effects of the American Civil War and the 1860s trade treaties with Great Britain and Belgium - which opened up the international market for cotton cloth to stiff competition - encouraged a switch to other fibres. By the late 1870s, the Lille <u>arrondissement</u> had 138 cotton spinning mills, 10 combined cotton spinning and weaving mills, and 140 cotton weaving factories. These employed 7,210 men, 1,120 women, and 515 children. By comparison, the processing of flax and jute had 124 spinning mills and 89 spinning and weaving mills, employing 24,810 men, 14,125 women, and 1,890 children.[5] Jute manufacture was centered in the workers' <u>quartiers</u> of

Wazemmes, Esquermes and Moulins-Lille, where there were 8,937 spindles.[6] Lille also dominated the French flax and linen industry, with 456,000 spindles, or two-thirds of all such machinery in France.[7]

Roubaix and Tourcoing, on the other hand, had become primarily wool cities by the opening years of the 1880s. The industry in these two cities produced three products: combed and carded wool, wool thread (both find and coarse) and wool cloth. In the early years of our period, about half the wool cloth produced was still woven by hand, by workers working in their homes. In 1885, Roubaix's 124 wool cloth manufacturers employed 25,000 weavers, among whom about half worked at home. The other half was employed in the city's factories. [8]

Between 1880 and 1914, four factors dominated the textile industries of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing. First, small factories were rapidly swallowed up by the giants of the industry, and the number of owners and factories decreased markedly. Second, the textile patronat tended to meet growing international competition both by specialising (e.g. in very fine cloth), and by increasing production with work speed-ups, tighter factory discipline, and the maintenance of 10 to 14 hour days long after other textile-producing countries had shortened hours. Textile profits tended not to be re-invested in new machinery or new techniques that might have allowed such a reform. (Instead, the textile

patronat, like many other French men and women, invested their profits abroad.)[9] Third, the few giant owners gradually began to draw together to pursue their collective interests. This consortial growth with its accompanying secrecy was reflected in the deliberately vague answers given to governmental officials about profits, investments, and even numbers of workers. Finally, the industry was constantly in a state of flux.[10] Conditions varied from factory to factory, and the debilitating influence of constantly changing fashions threw hundreds of workers and their machines in and out of work on an unpredictable basis. Long "dead" seasons were followed by frenzied over-activity.

These four factors together make it difficult to follow with coherence the entire textile industry through the 34 years before the First World War. The detailed economic history which this task would require lies outside the province of this dissertation. However, it is possible to trace the rough outlines of the growth and decline of the various industries in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing.

During the 1880s, the situation in all textile factories, except those processing wool, was generally grave for spinners, though weavers of cotton and linen cloth remained employed.[11] This meant that the majority of textile workers in Lille, where wool was not particularly

important, were either under- or unemployed. Because wool flourished in this same decade, most workers in Roubaix and Tourcoing were working full (12 hour) days.[12]

In 1890, wool joined the other textile products in a long downward plunge. Textile exports began to drop seriously in 1891; likewise, the prices paid for processed cotton, flax, hemp, jute and wool began a downward spiral, broken only occasionally by brief upturns in the market, which lasted until late 1896 for combed wool, and 1897-8 for the other fibres.[13] Thus French textile exports dropped in value each year, from 180 millions of francs in 1890, to 128 millions in 1897, 93 millions in 1900 and finally, 72 millions in 1902.[14] There was a brief upturn in 1896 (to 160 millions), and this was matched by a rise in the market prices of flax, cotton and combed wool.[15]

Wool, which had shown a fairly steady rate of increase until the turn of the century, was hit hard by a combination of events. The McKinley tariff resulted in a massive drop in exports to the United States. Until 1900, exports of wool cloth to the U.S. had been increasing by about 1,162,000 kilograms per year.[16] Thus the tariff produced a serious crisis in the industries of Roubaix and Tourcoing after 1900. Changes in fashion also struck a devastating blow. Women's fashions, particularly, began to reflect a turn away from heavy fabrics toward fabrics that lent themselves to the new "sportif" life

popular among women of the French bourgeoisie.[17]

1901 was thus a black year in the workers' quartiers of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing. Prices of cotton, flax and wool plunged, and raw materials were scarce. In Lille, there was a meeting of the largest factory owners, which resulted in the laying off of all workers one full day a week.[18]

And the crisis continued unabated. The 1904 textile inquiry found only one bright spot in an otherwise grim picture; this was the carding and combing of wool. The processing of raw wool into material that could be spun and then woven into cloth flourished for one reason. The spinning and weaving industries in Belgium and Germany, which were in the process of developing rapidly, lacked facilities for cleaning, combing and carding. Thus while their imports of wool thread and cloth fell off drastically, the import of processed wool increased.[19] To a much smaller extent, France's spinners were able to produce specialised products that were still exportable. These included double-twisted thread, chained thread, or thread dyed in a special process. However, the industry generally was shrinking. One patronal syndicat reported the loss of 70,000 of Roubaix's 325,000 spindles.[20] This meant, of course, a concomitant loss of jobs for workers in the two wool cities.

By 1906, the situation had stabilised, though

textiles were no longer a major French industry. Flax (and linen cloth), cotton, jute and wool continued to be produced in the three cities, and hemp had been added, mainly in Lille. Unemployment, however, continued unabated, though periods of intense employment occurred sporadically.

Shortly after, the situation began to improve. Figures for 1908-1912 show a rapid increase in the export of wool thread. Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing combined exported 8,543,000 kilograms of wool thread, worth 47,628,000 francs in 1908. In 1910 the figures had risen to 11,485,300 kg, worth 76,209,000 francs. By 1912 they had reached 13,528,000 kg, worth over 86,000,000 francs.[21] By the following year, growth in the industry had produced euphoria among the syndicated textile workers. Victor Renard, the leader of the socialist national textile federation reported that the long, dark period of industrial decline was 'certainly over'.[22] Unfortunately, his joy was to be short-lived, as the war cut into the three cities' major industry, once more sending it into chaos.

Several distinct processes comprised the production of textiles. The details of these processes, of course, varied according to the fibre used, but generally they included four basic stages. First, the raw wool, cotton, flax, jute or hemp was unpacked, cleaned, and

prepared for combing or carding. These latter processes drew the cleaned fibers into parallel strands, then flattened these into long ribbons. Further stages lengthened the flattened ribbons, and prepared them for winding onto bobbins. After being wound, they were ready for spinning. These processes together were called preparation, and occurred either in their own factories - especially if wool was the raw material - or in separate rooms of spinning factories.

After spinning, the thread produced could be twisted into double strands (a process called "retorderie"), which gave the thread more strength, or tied into chains of thread. Next, the thread was dyed, bleached, or "finished" (i.e. glazed) and sent on to the weaving mill (or exported). After weaving, the cloth could be printed. Some cloth was finished at this stage as well. [23]

Each of these steps - preparation, spinning, weaving, dyeing/bleaching, and finishing - comprised a separate occupational category (thus women were said to be preparation workers, regardless of the specific task they performed within this stage), and usually occurred in separate mills. After 1880, however, it was increasingly common for one patronal family to own mills for several of the processes.

Two groups of people made the textiles of the Nord department - the patronat and the workers. We shall

examine the owners first: who they were, what they owned, and how their behaviour towards their workers reflected attitudes which rebelling workers had to confront in strikes and protests. This section will be brief; we are not concerned here with the view from the top, except in so far as it affected those below - particularly, the women textile workers.

The Textile Patronat

Because the great founding families of the Nord's textile industry consistently ran against the French tide by refusing to sell shares in their enterprises to the public, the production of textiles stayed in the hands of relatively few - and consequently extremely powerful - families. These families expanded their wealth and their factories with each new generation. "For each new son", it was said in Lille, "his own factory". Daughters played a feudal role, and married - or were married - into other textile families, so that control shrank into fewer and fewer hands.

A few examples will serve to illustrate the enormous range of patronal wealth and power in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing. The biggest textile family of them all was the Mottes. In 1914, one of the family firms, Alfred Motte et cie (founded in 1879) employed 7,000 workers in nine Roubaix textile factories. The firm also

owned works at Fourmies, Saint-Fond, and Corbie, all in the Nord department - and factories in Belgium, Russian Poland, and Moscow. Its total worth was said to be five million gold francs; the Motte family was consequently the most powerful in Roubaix.[24]

In Tourcoing, at the end of the nineteenth century, Tibergien et fils, which produced prepared wool, wool thread, and wool cloth, employed 2,300 workers. The firm owned 50,000 spindles for spinning and twisting wool thread, and 1,050 mechanical looms. Fifty tons of wool were processed each week, and the annual turnover was 18 million francs. A smaller wool firm in the same city was François Masurel, which employed 900 workers on 66,500 spindles. That firm's annual turnover was over 14 million francs.[25]

In Lille, in the 1880s, even while cotton declined elsewhere, it retained its profitability at J. Thiriez père et fils. This family owned factories spread over twenty hectares, which included one spinning mill, one thread twisting mill, a bleaching factory, several machine repair workshops, and a building workshop. J. Thiriez employed 1,535 workers, including 672 women.[26]

Thus although the textile patronat of the three cities lamented their difficulties throughout our period, many of the largest owners prospered.[27] As personal fortunes grew, the patronat enjoyed all the activities

associated with the Belle Epoque elsewhere in France. They built elaborate homes in the three cities, and equally munificent country retreats. In Lille, their private homes tended to be built away from the workers' slums. However, in the rapidly expanding cities of Roubaix and Tourcoing, their mansions stood close by the massive red brick factories and the tiny cramped workers' courées, highlighting the painful contrast between the wealth of the owners of the means of production, and those who had only their labour to sell.

The patronat exhibited a mixture of attitudes toward their workers during our period. There are two recent studies of patronal attitutdes and behaviour in the three cities, one which focusses on the role of Catholicism in shaping the behaviour of the textile owners, and one on the role played by the female members of patronal families.[28] Both studies reach similar conclusions: firstly, that Catholicism rarely interfered with the patronal drive to increase profits - at whatever expense to the workers - and secondly, that the efforts made to enforce religious beliefs among workers provided an important means of disciplining and controlling the workforce. This latter feature of the Nord textile industry will be examined in the next section, along with the nature of Catholic charitable work among women textile workers. However, a brief look at patronal attitudes toward their workers, particularly women, will

establish the context for a discussion of life in turn-of-the-century textile mills.

Prevalent attitudes in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing granted two roles to bourgeois women: they could aspire to emulate the Virgin Mary, or fall from grace into the sinful state of Magdalene.[29] The activities of the women of patronal families among female textile workers reflected this manichean view of the special place of women in nineteenth century society. They were 'marys' - and working women were often magdalenes. Good women lived on moral pedestals, isolated from the evils of the outside world. Their duty was to guard the home and provide for the physical and spiritual needs of less spiritual male family members. Rigid control was exercised over such women by the Catholic Church, from the moment they entered Catholic primary schools.[30] An important aspect of their religious training was the teaching that women had a special duty toward their less fortunate sisters - the "deserving poor" whose morals were constantly at risk in the "promiscuous" world of mill and courée. Thus, as Bonnie Sullivan Smith has argued, the wives and daughters of the textile patronat believed that they had a spiritual responsibility to visit the homes of women workers, where they could exercise their special capacity to discern who was spiritually intact, and thus derserving of aid.[31]

Furthermore, these virtuous wives, mothers and sisters were "ladies"; as such, they were, in the words of Jules and Gustave Simon, "treated like queens", taught that they were "grace and poetry incarnate, the flowers of creation". [32]

Obviously such an ideology of women's special sphere contradicted the facts of women textile workers' lives. The bourgeois mother's role as guardian of the home was one to which few working women could aspire. Maternity rarely ended the careers of mill workers. Furthermore, courées provided little opportunity for working women to exercise their putative "special" spiritual gifts by creating havens of domestic peace amidst the harsh competitive work world "outside". Unlike bourgeois women of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing, textile workers lived and worked in a world where work and home were no more separate than were women from men, or girls from boys. Inside tiny courée lodgings, or on the mill floor, womanly modesty and helplessness had no more place than the genteel sexual ignorance expected of bourgeois women. [33] Thus Michelet's often cited horror at the idea of women factory workers - "L'ouvrière! mot impie, sordide, qu'aucune langue n'eut jamais, a aucun temps n'aurait compris avant cet age de fer..." [34] - found some echoes among the textile patronat. At the same time, however, the industry's labour requirements clearly contradicted these attitudes toward women, home and family. [35]

The effects of this contradiction between bourgeois and Catholic theories and working class reality in these textile cities was two-fold. Firstly, many patrons adopted a paternalistic attitude that allowed them to view their workers - both male and female - as "children" - different from themselves, often wayward, but still redeemable for the afterlife which was their 'true reward'.[36] Secondly, prevalent beliefs about the peculiarly spiritual nature of women helped to justify strenuous attempts to use religious strictures in controlling the female workforce. This religious discipline may have served to pacify some of the Catholic consciences of the patronat - but it also had a beneficial corollary as a rationalisation of severe factory discipline.

A third patronal attitude was much less complicated by papal injunctions, religious scruples, or beliefs about the special nature of women. Many patrons simply viewed their workers as lesser beings, ignoring them when they were docile, disdaining them as helpless dupes of outside agitators when they protested. In the 1880s, a Roubaix weaving mill owner told the prefect: "There was always perfect harmony between patronat and workers until now, when it is diminishing daily because of a unique cause (emphasis his): the International and revolutionary socialist doctrine which grom alarmingly among workers..." He added that workers in Roubaix were,

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consequently, "immoral and drunk". Their educational level was "very low", but that was their fault entirely, as both lay and Catholic schools were available to them, and Catholic Sunday schools even provided them with libraries. Furthermore, avaricious workers prevented their children from taking advantage of such educational opportunities by sending them into factories as soon as they were old enough to work. He hastened to add that this fact was no reason for the patronat to raise wages; higher pay would only lead these workers to "debauchery".[37]

The attitude of cynical indifference had not changed by 1909 when Dr. René Potelet, horrified at the high infant mortality rate in the factory towns of the Nord, proposed that crèches be established in factories so that working mothers could breast feed their infants. Fully aware of widespread patronal hostility, he attempted to defuse resistance by arguing that the room set aside for such a crèche need not be large, nor would it have to employ another worker, as women working on machines near the crèche would keep an eye on the infants. Furthermore, during the short breaks required for mothers to nurse their children, their machines could be tended by other workers, thus preventing any loss of production.

Dr. Potelet's caution proved of little avail, however. When he circulated his ideas among the Nord textile patronat, the typical response was that factories

had no more room to spare, and that furthermore, the high rate of infant deaths was not due to a lack of breast feeding, but rather to the "indifference" of women workers![38] Local magistrates and work inspectors also attested to the prevalence of patronal indifference. Both groups complained that the patronat rarely responded to complaints about working conditions or safety violations.[39]

The view from the top, then, was generally a complacent one. Even when they left their mansions to visit the courées (or, more commonly, sent their wives and daughters) or walked the factory floors, the patronat saw the status quo as inevitable. They saw no reason to alter conditions, unless such alterations had a direct positive effect on profits. This gap between owners' and workers' attitudes grew in the 34 years before the war, and the years were not surprisingly characterised by worker unrest, and the organisation of the Parti ouvrier and its ancillary textile unions.

The Textile Workforce

From the day when a girl first entered the factory - that "douloureaux calvaire des femmes du people", in the words of a contemporary[40] - to the day when ill-health or, less frequently, a surplus of children at home freed her, her life was rigidly circumscribed by

factory routines. Only strikes or unemployment, or the short break before and after maternity, broke the monotony of a textile worker's life. Once started at the mill, the result was predictable. Before long, a writer noted, a girl became 'little more than a machine, running or tending another machine; but she is a living machine, who feels pain, who suffers, who overworks, who becomes anaemic from overwork." [41]

A steam whistle began textile workers' days, summoning crowds of workers from their courée beds before dawn. By 6 a.m., most workers had passed through the iron factory gates and found their way to their workrooms and their machines. Workrooms were arranged differently in each factory, of course. Generally, however, the factory's first floor was reserved for the stages of preparation. Each stage usually occupied a separate room. From preparation, the material was sent upstairs to a winding room, where it was wound onto bobbins, ready for spinning. If the prepared material was not spun in that factory, it was next packed and sent off. Otherwise, it was sent to the spinning rooms. Some factories included rooms for the further steps of textile production - dyeing, bleaching or finishing, and, finally, weaving. Most, however, did not, and most spun thread left the spinning mill for these processes.

Almost every stage of this production process

employed a combination of men, women and children. From the 1880s onwards, there were few jobs in the textile mills of the three cities that were exclusively men's or women's work. Only in bleaching and dyeing, where men tended to predominate, and in some stages of preparation, where women were increasingly concentrated in our period, were there identifiable patterns of sex-segregated work. And in the latter case, workrooms were rarely segregated by sex, even when women tended to do one particular job - e.g. tending carding machines - and men another - e.g. transporting rollers of carded material. Thus in the case of the textile industry of these three cities men and women laboured together in the same workrooms, and often at identical tasks.[42]

It is important to note this fact at the outset because the sexual division of factory labour - which did occur elsewhere in France, as well as in England[43] - has often been advanced as part of the explanation for women's putative lack of political participation. It has been argued that because women were separated from male workers in the workplace, they developed a psychological inability to confront men in unions or political organisations. In the textile industry of these cities, however, such an explanation will not serve. On the contrary, more than one observer noted - often with contempt - the familiarity between men and women in the

factories; in fact, women were far from shy or fearful in the presence of their male co-workers or supervisors, as we shall see in the next section of this thesis. Frequently they competed with men for the highest wages possible under the piece rate.[44] (The whole vexed question of a sexual division of labour produced by industrialisation requires extensive discussion, and the reader concerned with this issue is referred to Appendix I.)

Although textile jobs were rarely segregated by sex, wages were. Women, following a long tradition in European industrial countries, consistently earned from one-half to two-thirds as much as male workers. Furthermore, women's (and men's) wages apparently remained stable throughout the 34 years before the war. With a steady rise in living costs, this meant that real wages in the Nord's textile industry were dropping, even as increasing numbers of women entered the workforce.

Before presenting a brief analysis of women's wages during our period, it should be noted that all figures are necessarily open to question. Wage rates were as confusing as all the other data concerning the textile industries of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing. Having examined all possible sources, the historian must concur with the parliamentary textile commission which concluded its exhaustive study of wages in the three cities in 1904 with these words: "It is, in reality,

nearly impossible to draw any general conclusion from the numbers obtained".[45]

Despite the probable inaccuracy of precise wage figures, however, the following data suggest wage trends in the textile industries of the three cities. In the opening years of our period, women textile workers earned on the average about 65% of male wages. (See Table 1.) Comparable overall figures are unavailable until 1896, though two fragments of information suggest that in the intervening years, women's wages remained about the same - 2.40 francs/day - while men's rose, to about 4.25 francs/day.[46] Women's wages thus dropped to about 56% of men's.

In 1896, official strike data began to provide an important source of information on wages. Of course, these figures reported only striking workers' wages, which were not necessarily representative of average wages throughout the industry. Nevertheless, Table 2 shows strikers' wages from 1896 to 1911, and, when possible, compares three jobs held by both male and female workers. The table shows that women's wages tended to drop between the mid-1890s and 1911, though as a percentage of male wages they remained about the same, except in the single occupation of <u>rattachage</u>, in which men and women tended to earn about the same wage.

Neither men's nor women's wages changed much over

TABLE 1

Average daily wages in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing in 1885 (all occupations)

	Men	*Women*
Lille	2.75-5.00	2.00-2.50
Roubaix	2.75-5.00	2.50-3.50
Tourcoing	2.75-5.00	2.20

(Source: A.N.C. 3019. Enquête des situations ouvrières, 1872-1885)

* * * * * * * * * * *

TABLE 2

Average daily wages for the period 1896-1911 (Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing combined)

Occupation	*1896*		*1902*		*1906*		*1911*	
	m	*f*	*m*	*f*	*m*	*f*	*m*	*f*
Rattacheur	3.90	2.80	3.00	3.00	3.40	3.40	?	?
Fileur	5.00	2.15/ 2.25	?	?	6.60	2.75	4.50	2.50/ 3.00
Tisseur	3.67	2.98	3.63	2.80	3.50	2.75	5.00	3.00
All Occup.	3.47	2.89	4.50	2.60	4.45	2.77	4.31	2.48

(Source: France, Statistiques des grèves, 1896, 1902, 1906, 1911)

our period. Furthermore, women who worked on "mixed" jobs - with the exception of rattacheuse - earned on the average only slightly more than women working in exclusively women's jobs. Dévideuses, for example, (who tended thread-reeling machines) consistently earned about 2.60 francs/day throughout the pre-war years. [47]

Unlike other sectors of the French economy, textiles were in a long period of secular slump throughout our period, and workers' wages reflected this decline. Thus during the years between 1880 and 1914, when wages in the French coal industry rose 46.3%, [48] textile wages remained static, or in some cases, fell. Women's wages probably stayed between 2 and 3 francs per day. [49] By comparison, a "good" miner in 1901 was earning 10 francs a day - and his company housing was generally cheaper, his coal free. [50] His wages did not rise very rapidly after 1901 - the major rise having occurred between 1880 and 1900 - but they did increase by 17% by 1914. [51]

The effects of low wages on textile working families were complicated by extended, and unpredictable, periods of unemployment. Smaller factories failed, and shut down. When prices fell, or foreign demand dropped, large factories laid off workers, or cut hours. From the earliest years of our period, textile workers in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing lived with constant insecurity. [52]

At the beginning of our period, one mayor sent a distressed cry for help to the Nord prefect, declaring that textile workers in his commune, and elsewhere in Roubaix and Tourcoing, were in dire need due to the industrial slump. Most workers, he reported, were unemployed. Only a few were able to find alternative work in agriculture, or in the domestic out-putting system, where they worked from 6 a.m. to 11 at night but did not earn enough to subsist. In his commune, he added, 3,752 inhabitants were textile workers or members of textile workers' families (out of 4,324 inhabitants in the commune as a whole). Of these, 571 people, in 117 households, were completely indigent, and dependent on the commune for their subsistence. This working class commune was unable to provide much help, and needed aid from the department.[53]

The 1904 parliamentary commission found that little had changed in the intervening years after 1880. Information given to that commission by both workers and patronal groups regarding unemployment was uniquely consistent; the workers' interest in exposing their hardships was matched by the patronat's desire to prove that textiles suffered "dead seasons", and should therefore be exempt from hour-limiting legislation.[54]

In 1906, the census offered the following retrospective averages for chômage in the Nord department. For

every 10,000 people in the department, there were 84 days of unemployment in 1896, and 128 in 1901. These figures compare with 69 and 81 days for France as a whole, pointing up the peculiar hardship of workers' lives in the Nord.[55]

One result of the workers' uncertain employment patterns was that they were forced to resort to credit in order to live. There were three places where credit could be obtained: the "économats", or company stores, local estaminets, or shops. The first, so much a feature of coalmining towns throughout the industrialised world,[56] were uncommon in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing. When employers did offer such stores, however, the workers were forced to buy there, both because they needed the credit offered, and because their job security often depended on their patronising company économats.[57] At two company stores, Tiberghien frères (Tourcoing), and Thiriez père et fils (Lille), workers complained that prices were 10% higher than elsewhere.[58]

Most workers depended on local shops or estaminets for credit. In 1885, a Roubaix patron complained that his workers' imprudence at cabarets forced them into debt.[59] A Tourcoing spinning mill owner agreed, saying that his workers were "always" in debt.[60] Many witnesses before the 1904 parliamentary commission also attested to this heavy indebtedness among textile

workers. So heavy was the debt carried by many workers, in fact, that some pay packets arrived empty after having been attached by creditors (a practice that remained legal in France throughout our period). The Tourcoing Chambre de commerce estimated the normal cost of such credit at 27 fr.25 for a 20 fr. debt, or a 36.25% interest rate.[61]

To the loss of wages to creditors, some women textile workers added a second loss - to husbands. How widespread this abuse was is impossible to ascertain. However, in 1904 a woman's section of the Fédération syndicale de l'industrie tourquennoise (a yellow union) complained to the parliamentary commission that their wages were often paid to their husbands without their consent. They wanted the commission to make it clear to the patronat that their wages belonged solely to them.[62] Apparently the married women's property act, passed in 1896[63] as a response to intense pressure from French feminists, had no effect on working women in the Nord - or on the patronat which allowed husbands to claim women's pay packets.

Whatever was left to textile workers each week had to stretch further and further as the cost of living in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing rose throughout the Belle Epoque. Before analysing the movement of prices during our period, we should remind ourselves of the yearly incomes of most textile workers.

We can legitimately assume that the average number of months most textile workers were employed was

between the seven to eight months estimated by witnesses before the 1904 commission.[64] Some workers, of course, worked much less, and general unemployment was widespread. However, if we assume that at least two incomes - a man's and a woman's - supported most textile families, and that each worker worked at least 200 days a year, the best combined yearly averages (using wage data cited above) were:

1885	1,320 francs
1893	1,420 francs
1896	1,272 francs
1902	1,420 francs
1906	1,444 francs
1911	1,358 francs.

For each child working, the added wages probably amounted to between 1 and 1 fr. 50/day. Thus a further 200 to 300 francs can be added for working children, again assuming that the children worked 200 days a year.[65]

What did it cost to live in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing during the Belle Epoque? One French government study estimated that one male manual labourer, living alone, and eating "normally" (i.e., eating food not usually affordable for most textile workers, such as meat and fruit) needed the following yearly wage:

1885	1,635 francs
1893	1,491 francs
1896	1,397 francs
1906	1,181 francs
1909	1,234 francs. [66]

According to the government's estimate, then, a textile family never earned enough for all its members - or

even one of them - to eat a "normal" diet. (The patronat was unconcerned, however. When one bobineuse told a factory director that her 1888 wages - 10 francs a week - were not enough even to "butter her bread", he told her, "Use lard; it's cheaper and good enough for an ouvrière".) 67

Despite this, textile families did survive, of course. One typical worker's budget, from an 1880 prefectoral report, showed how one family managed. The family, a flax comber, earned 15.15 fr. a week, or about 700 fr. a year (assuming 200 days of work). Two of his young sons also worked in textiles, and together earned 13.20 fr./week (290 francs a year). The family, which included a wife and four small children at home, lived on 28.35 francs a week. The Bureau de bienfaisance gave them three kilograms of bread a week, and they spent:

rent = 2.75	butter/lard = 3.50	potatoes = 1.40
bread = 11.50	gas (lighting) = 0.75	soap = 0.60
coal = 2.20	salt/pepper = 0.30	milk = 0.70
coffee/chicory = 1.20	vegetables = 1.75	fagots/matches = 0.50

One pair of sabots a week, and various clothing repairs, etc. = 1.80.

The family's staples, then, were bread and about one-half pound of potatoes per person, per day. Thus they "lived" on their income of 1,505.4 fr. a year. 68

In 1904, the yellow textile workers' syndicat of Tourcoing estimated the weekly budget for a family with only two children (though the average among textile

workers was four children) was 20.50 fr./week, or 1,066 fr./year.[69] Their budget included no amenities - no entertainment, clothes, shoes, or alcohol, no meat, no butter, and no money for syndicat dues or workers' newspapers. The family staples were bread (10 kilograms a week), and potatoes (20 kilos/week). After rent and bread, the largest single expense was a credit payment of three francs a week, which suggests that they were not actually able to subsist on their combined wages, whatever the optimism of the yellow syndicat.

It is obvious from these budgets that working women, who earned an average of 2.70 francs a day (or 541 fr./year) throughout our period, could not have subsisted alone, and certainly could not have supported children on textile wages. Extra money - or help from charities, if theywere "deserving" - was necessary for women on their own, or for women whose husbands were unable to work. It is likely that many women turned to earning money in what they called the "fifth quarter" of the day, by prostitution.[70] Charles Poisson observed that many women in 1906 were earning "le pain amer" by this means.[71] And he added, sympathetically, "Now we can understand the painful truth of that phrase a little ouvrière let slip in our hearing: "It is hard to die when one is still young, but all the same, it is hard to live!"[72] In addition to their "bitter bread", these women existed

on "some beer...some salted butter, some buttermilk, sometimes some vegetables, but almost never any meat". They lived, moreover, "in filthy slums, without air, without light".[73]

Another contemporary, the work inspector Caroline Milhaud, described the hard life of an Armentières bobineuse in 1907, and concluded that it was such hardship that accounted in part for the contemporary increase in suicides among women workers.[74]

Even by 1914, there was little observable improvement in the living standard of textile workers. One writer watching ouvrières leaving a Lille mill said that the women were so thin that "their sabots looked like boats".[75] Sixteen-year-old girls looked like 12 year olds; their skin was yellow from malnourishment.[76] For lunch these ouvrières ate thin soup, some potatoes, and bits of bread washed down with beer which they bought at a nearby estaminet. For dinner, - which they ate at home - they had only bread with some coffee and chicory. These ourvrières never ate a diet sufficient for their caloric needs, or for their nutritional requirements.[77] One Roubaix textile worker told the Bonneff brothers that since she had married she had never eaten her fill. She, with her eight children and husband lived on 2.50 francs a day. Moreover, although she was only in the earliest stages of tuberculosis - at a point when the

disease could be arrested with proper care - the Bonneffs noted that she was doomed to die in a few years unless she left the courée, and found sufficient food and cleanliness. She was just 30.[78]

When the two Bonneffs visited other workers' quartiers in Lille and Roubaix in the second decade of this century, they found no families living on wages as high as those we have estimated above (i.e., about 1,358 francs/year in 1911). Of a number of families surveyed by the tuberculosis preventorium, those with five members earned on the average. 4.98 fr./day (less than 1000 fr./year), and those with six members, 5.53 fr./day (about 1,106 fr./year).[79]

Clearly, suffering was endemic among textile workers in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing. Only by using credit - and paying heavily for it - and by pawning "good" clothes and household furnishings at the ubiquitous monts-de-piéte, could families survive from day to day. Furthermore, a woman alone, particularly if she had children, barely subsisted. Concluding a study of the lives of French ouvrières, Boisson wrote: "One has then, a clear idea of the distress that lies at the heart of a working woman's existence, though she sometimes tries to hide her misery behind a few flowers and ribbons".[80]

Working Conditions

In order to earn this meagre existence, women worked long hours in the textile mills of the three cities. Before 1892 factory legislation limited women's hours, they worked according to production demands - and often exceeded the 12 hour limit set by unenforced 1848 laws. In the 1880s, textile workers - men, women and children - commonly worked 12-14 hour days.[81] Eating breaks during the day were usually spent at the machines - either cleaning them (always the duty of the workers, and always unpaid) or continuing to run them. Machine stoppages during the working day were virtually unknown; such stoppages were costly both for the patronat and for workers trying to make their piece rate each hour.

In 1892 the Third Republic passed a law limiting the legal working day. Children, who were proscribed from entering the factory before 12 or 13, were limited to 10 hours until they turned 16. Then they, like women, could work a maximum of 11 hours a day. The law required that the mills close down at least one day per week - usually Sundays.

Work inspectors were provided to enforce the new law. Their influence, however, was negligible. When a 1900 law further limited hours to 10½ (and included in its provisions all male workers who worked in the same workrooms with women) the work inspectors found their work even more difficult than before. The textile patronat, after 1892, had developed a variety of means

by which they flouted the laws. Worse, even when inspectors were able to catch infractions, the magistrates levied only derisory fines of a few francs. (The average fine levied against French industriels in 1897 was only 4 fr. 30!) [82] These small fines were easily absorbed by the textile patronat.

That the hours legislation had little effect on workers' days in the factory was clear from all work inspectors' reports for the three cities in the period after 1892. Their reports throughout the 1890s showed women and girls working 11 to 14 hour days in the mills.[83]

The workers' press added its voice to the complaints of work inspectors. L'Ouvrier des deux mondes printed a series of articles in 1897 about the overwork of French workers of both sexes. The writer of these articles pointed out that the British, Belgian, German and Austrian textile workers all worked shorter hours than French textile workers, and still produced more. [84]

Voix du Peuple complained in 1900 that the 10½ hour law was widely ignored, especially in the Nord textile mills. [85] Furthermore, it claimed that the patronat was using the law to divide men and women in the working class struggle. Thus, for example, in one Tourcoing wool mill, the men were paid for working 11 hours, though they, like the women, actually worked only 10½. The women, on the other hand, were paid for only 10½ hours. This

disparity created tension among workers on the shop floor.[86]

Throughout the 1904 textile hearings, a variety of witnesses complained of patronal indifference to protective legislation. Sophisticated defensive tactics had been developed in the 12 years after the law. Thus, for example, the patronat had erected flimsy barriers in some workshops which divided men from women; the men could thus be said to be working in a segregated workroom, where they were not protected by the hours law.[87] Furthermore, the patronat developed a warning system among themselves. Word of the approach of a work inspector spread quickly among the factories, and violations could be temporarily corrected for the period of the inspector's visit.[88]

The patronat also exploited every loophole in the law. Thus, whenever possible, women workers were required to take extra work home. To refuse was to lose a job. Further, the patronat used every minute allotted to them by the law. Thus, in addition to requiring workers to remain at their machines during periods of "rest", they made up any time lost, because of machine malfunctions or accidents, at the end of the day. The workers complained that the time was not really "lost", however. During periods of machine stoppage, they were required to clean or tidy the workrooms. Thus the legal extension

of time at the end of the day only resulted in a longer day for the workers.[89]

The frustration of work inspectors, engendered by patronal indifference to the law, was voiced everywhere in their official reports.[90] Caroline Milhaud complained that her work was virtually pointless.[91] She knew, for instance, that women in Roubaix's and Tourcoing's textile mills were working up to 19 hours at a stretch, but she could not catch the violation. Her major problem lay with the workers themselves, who would not answer her questions. "The fear of being fired, which I can read in their faces," she wrote, "nails their tongues". If she pressed them "a half-blindness strikes them."[92] Thus work inspectors were thwarted at every turn; hours legislation remained unenforced in the textile mills of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing throughout the years before the war.

The factory laws of 1892, 1900 and 1904 were not limited to hours, but included further provisions for the health and safety of factory workers. The key provisions affecting textile mills included requirements for ventilation systems to cool and circulate steamy air and to evacuate at least some dust from the workrooms, changing rooms (so that workers' street clothes could remain dry during the day), toilets, wash basins, and supplies of "good quality" drinking water. Safety

regulations included covering dangerous moving parts of machines (especially the lethal gears of textile machinery), and enlarging spaces between machines so that those workers (very often children) whose jobs required them to crawl around under the machines tying up broken threads and so on, would be less likely to get caught in gears. Additional space was also necessary to reduce the danger to workers in case of fires, - a constant threat in gas-lit workrooms full of textile fibres and oil.[93] Lighting was supposed to be adequate to prevent accidents, especially on night shifts. Further, the laws absolutely forbade the dangerous practice of cleaning and oiling machines while they were running. Finally, workers were to be allowed three rest breaks during the day so that they could leave the machines to eat or relax.[94]

Witnesses to the frequent infractions of these important health and safety regulations were legion in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing at the turn of the century. They were the relatively young men and women dying of tuberculosis, bronchitis, or "brown lung" (which was only beginning to be diagnosed as such in this period). They were the unemployed, whose impaired breathing prevented their continuing work in the textile industry. They were also those workers without fingers, hands and even arms - all lost to the powerful gears of textile

machinery. Perhaps the most frightening group of all were the women who had been "scalped" when their hair was caught by the machines. [95]

Factory conditions thus complemented the unhealthy world of the courée. Constant inhalation of bits of cotton, jute, hemp, flax and wool which clung to the skin, hair and clothes, was complicated by the extremely high temperatures and staggering humidity necessary for processing the raw fibres. Heat in the "hellish" workrooms ranged from 77^{o} to 104^{o}, with a humidity of 90% In steaming clouds of dust, workers were soon coated, drenched, and sweating. After only a few minutes in the factory, most workers had shed as much of their clothing as possible (provoking widespread criticism about their lack of morality from various middle class reformers). Men worked bare-chested, and women in their chemises and underskirts. Their street clothes ususally hung on nails on nearby walls, and became covered with dust and saturated with water. Added to the extreme physiolocial burden of working at exhausting, noisy, heavy machines throughout a 10 to 12 hour day was the trip home in the cold, foggy weather of French Falnders. In winter, workers went from steaming factory workrooms into outside temperatres of 35^{o}-37^{o}. Wet clothes, coupled with exhaustion, rendered them particularly susceptible to disease. A constant cycle of overheating and chilling also contributed to the

"special anaemia" characteristic of young women textile workers, and to the miscarriages and still births commong among pregnant workers.[96]

Simple sanitation was also lacking in most factories. Open air latrines were most common, and where indoor toilets were provided, they were often in rooms adjacent to workrooms. One worker described the toilets at Barrois frères in Lille as "black holes without air". "You can imagine," he added, "the odour one breathes in the summer in such factories."[97] Much of the textile production process also produced adours that were "nauséabonde" - adding to the stench from unventilated toilets and sweating workers.[98]

The workers' most common defense against these conditions was drink - drink to clear their lungs of the dust, and drink to slake their constant thirst with something other than the often contaminated, dirty water provided by the patronat.[99] And although drinking temporarily alleviated some of the misery of their working lives, it also contributed to the harrowing accidents that occurred regularly in the Nord textile factories.

Textiles ranked near the bottom of France's sixteen most dangerous industries;[100] the long term effects of dust, noise, heat and humidity presented a greater danger to the health of textile workers than did factory accidents. However, accidents did occur at a steady rate

throughout our period. Their usual cause - cleaning running machines - reflected the patronat's indifference to governmental safety requirements, as well as to the safety of their workers. It also suggested one of the most serious consequences of the patronal practice of paying by the piece; workers, anxious to make their rate, grew careless in their haste, and serious accidents were too often the result.[101]

Before examining the types of accidents most common among textile workers of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing, it should be noted that because the reporting of such accidents depended upon the cooperation of the patronat, figures available are problematic. Owners were required to list only the most serious accidents, and their definition of "serious" was sometimes rather narrow. (Thus, for example, accidents that did not result in several days away from the factory often wen unrecorded.) Work inspectors, who made valiant attempts to collect accident data, often complained that many serious accidents were thus ignored. The Lille textile patronat, one inspector added, was particularly notorious for neglecting to report accidents, or, when they did, for providing only the most cursory information.[102]

Furthermore, workers - especially women workers - often preferred to have their injuries overlooked, lest they lose their jobs. In 1900, one inspector reported that women usually pretended that they were not hurt.

He concluded that work inspectors should learn not to rely on workers' words, but should instead learn to examine the hands of ouvrières.[103] (The issue of women's apparently greater fear over job loss, which has been remarked before, will be discussed in detail in the next section.)

Examples taken from the period 1880-1914 show a steady increase in textile accidents.[104] It was not a per capita increase, however. Instead, it reflected two changes: one, the Office du Travail (founded in 1891) developed better collection procedures, and, two, the industry expanded from only about 30,000 workers at the beginning of our period to at least 240,000 at the end. Women's accident rate was clearly much lower than men's. In 1911-1912, adult women were 23% of the injuries in Roubaix, Tourcoing and Wattrelos, and 29% of those in Lille. There were probably three reasons for this lower injury rate. First, adult women more often worked in the less-hazardous jobs, where there was little risk of accidental injury. An example of such work was that done by women (inaccurately called "fileuses") in wet spinning mills, who worked feeding thread through tubs of hot water. The work was hard - their hands worked in two separate tubs all day, and they stood, barefooted or in sabots, in water, which ran constantly across the stone floors. But as there were no exposed gears with which they had to contend, and little actual machine

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cleaning involved, the likelihood of serious accidents was small.[105]

Second, one observer noted that men were more likely to "show off". They apparently took pride in exhibiting their speed and dexterity to other workers, and at the end of a long day, such "machismo" could cost them dearly.[106] In addition, many workers spent the lunch break drinking - and to judge from the factory rules prohibiting the practice, some even managed to smuggle beer or gin into the factory itself. Because of social restraints, and because of their responsibility for children during their breaks, women workers may have been less prone to drink during the working day.[107]

Third, women were probably a bit more careful, even when they worked on machines identical to those worked by men. However, what one observer called their "womanly habits" could also get them into trouble. In 1913, an inspector wrote,

> It is easy to understand that by instinct, by habits learned in the family, an ouvrière is trained to use a dust-cloth or brush as though it is an extension of her hand. Thus, when her work requires only that she watch a machine, she too easily, unthinkingly reaches out to clean or adjust something in the machine, and then catches her hand.[108]

In virtually all the accident reports, the patronat blamed the workers. Workers, when they did risk their jobs by reporting their own accidents to work inspectors, blamed the mill owners. After 1898 when the law

required that injured workers be compensated, regardless of who was responsible for the accident, such assessments vanished from the reports. However, most workers did not press for such compensation, preferring instead to retain their jobs. When compensation was paid, furthermore, it was minimal. In the case of permanent, total incapacity, a worker had the right to free medical care and drugs, and to two-thirds of his or her usual annual wage. In case of death - and death had to follow immediately after the injury - the patron paid for the funeral ("up to 100 francs"), and paid the following indemnities: to the surviving spouse, 20% of the dead worker's usual annual wage; to surviving children - if both parents were dead, and if they were under 16 - 15% for one child, 25% for two, 35% for three, and 40% for four or more.[109]

Clearly it was not to legislative reforms that workers could look for changes in their working conditions.

CHAPTER 4

CONTROLLING THE WORKFORCE

The Third Republic's efforts to ensure industrial peace in the Belle Epoque with factory legislation were generally ineffectual throughout most of France.[1] In the Nord department, strikes and walk-outs wracked the industry, exacerbating the problems faced by a patronat struggling against an economic tide that threatened to overwhelm them. Unlike officials of the Republic, however, the patronat of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing put little faith in factory reforms. Instead, they relied on a combination of economic, religious and political pressures to control their workforce.[2] The Catholic Church willingly collaborated - both by providing surveillance on the shop floors, and by extending it into workers' outside lives.

Economic Constraints

Economic pressures applied by the owners to keep their often unruly workforce in line were of three kinds. First, the hiring system was meticulous, and full of pitfalls for the workers. Second, a straightforward system of fines and bonuses enforced factory rules, and helped foremen and supervisors to separate "good" (i.e. cooperative) workers from the rest. (There were few completely "bad" workers; an oversupply of willing

labour guaranteed the immediate firing of any workers who were too troublesome.) Third, a sophisticated system of factory surveillance and intimidation - which included the sexual harrassment of female workers - strengthened the workers' ever-present fear of unemployment, and served to discipline the textile workers of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing.

Hiring took place only at the factory gates. No placement bureaus - or bourses de travail - existed in the three cities until late in our period; even then, they affected relatively few workers. Prospective workers had to present their livrets (worker's identification booklets) before being hired. These livrets included their work history, and thus provided an effective means of blacklisting uncooperative - or politically active - workers. The livret was abolished by the Third Republic in 1890; but this law, like other work legislation, was ignored by the patronat of these three cities. Livrets continued to be a condition of employment in the textile industry well into the twentieth century.[3] Some employers required additional recommendations from local priests, or evidence of membership in one or more approved workers' organisations.[4]

If prospective workers successfully passed these hurdles, they were hired. Before starting work, however, they were forced to sign a contract stating their

willingness to abide by all factory rules.[5] Rules were strict, and rigidly enforced by fines. One set of rules from an Armentières factory in 1882 forbade lateness, absence without an approved medical certificate, leaving the factory without written permission, allowing any strangers inside the factory, touching any machine without a foreman's permission, smoking, drinking, or damaging anything in the factory. All workers were required to keep their work areas clean, and to be "honest, respectful and obedient". "Horse play" inside the factory was strictly forbidden - a rule directed specifically at the thousands of children employed in the Nord textile mills. (Throwing bobbins - the example offense cited in the rules - must have been a frequent temptation for all but the most obedient children.) The rules further stipulated that anything broken because of a worker's carelessness had to be paid for, and anything stolen would result in firing and a fine equal to double the value of the stolen item. Workers could not allow any machine parts to touch the floors (which were running with water and filth) nor could they enter or leave their workrooms by any door other than that designated. Only one worker could leave a workroom at a time. Men and women were particularly forbidden to use the outdoor toilets at the same time, even in those rare instances when men's and women's facilities were separate. Finally, these rules forbade

leaving the machines unattended, or leaving them dirty at the end of the day.[6]

The Armentières textile mill's fining system was also typical of that used throughout the industry. Every offense had its specific penalty. In addition, fines were levied for "inferior" work, and this made the distribution of raw materials an important issue. If the foreman or woman disliked any worker, for any reason, that worker could be given inferior raw material, which would result in continual fines for mediocre work. Further, poor raw materials could slow a worker's rate, thus lowering his or her wages. [7]

Fines in the Armentières textile mill varied from 20 centimes (e.g., for talking) to several francs. Such fines were typical throughout the industry, and were freely applied. One writer noted in 1914 that a Lille mill, which employed 250 workers, collected 1,000 francs in fines every fifteen days. This amounted to 1.4 fr. a week per worker.[8] In another Lille factory, the same writer found fines levied for lateness (25 centimes), talking (25-50 centimes), and for missing a day without an approved doctor's excuse (1 franc).[9] The mill owner usually profited from such one day absences. Workers were forced to double up, and to run the absent worker's machine, and for this they were paid a 1 franc bonus. Because the fine and the bonus were the same, the owner saved the 2-4.50 franc wages, without losing production time.[10]

Workers, not surprisingly, hated the fines. The workers' press in our period was full of stories about gratuitous fining by foremen and supervisors. One local paper told of a Lille ouvrière who was fined one franc for falling while dragging a heavy case of bobbins. When she became angry and yelled "violent words" at the foreman, he retaliated by pulling the drive belt on her machine. Then he fined her two more francs - for breaking her machine. Indulging her anger thus cost this woman three francs - the equivalent of one and a half days of work.[11]

Some "black humour" about the fining system also circulated in the mills. One widely told story concerned an ouvrière at Filature Wallaert who became ill, stayed home from work one day, and died that night. The patron, it was said, withheld 20 sous (1 franc) from her final pay packet as a fine, on the grounds that she had failed to get the proper medical certificate attesting to the genuineness of her illness before she died.[12]

Many workers, of course, accepted the fining system with resignation. It may be true - as several observers noted - that women especially resigned themselves. The Lille workers' syndicat, for example, testifying before the parliamentary commission in 1904, echoed many work inspectors' laments that women's fear of unemployment kept them mute.[13] It is not clear, obviously, to what extent these observations reflected

commonly held ideas about the greater passivity of women. Strike evidence, and many reports of political activity (all of which will be examined in detail in the following section) suggest that women were far from passive in the face of patronal coercion. However, if the women textile workers of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing were "more resigned" to fining and intimidation than the men, their words to Marcelle Capy in 1914 suggest one explanation: "If the men spend their pay at the estaminets", said one group of ouvrières, don't we have to feed the kids?" [14]

In addition to regular fines, women workers were subjected to constant sexual harassment from the male supervisory personnel. To object was to risk being classified as a "difficult" worker - and penalised with poor quality materials. Resistance also provoked extra fines - a variety of pretexts was always available - and sometimes even provoked firing. Reports of such sexual harassment abound in the workers' press during our period. Le Cri du Travailleur ran a series of such reports throughout 1887 and 1888. On one occasion, a "brutal" foreman became so notorious that he was finally fired for abusing a young girl in his factory. [15]

On another occasion, the Parti Ouvrier's newspaper, Le Travailleur, used one instance of sexual harassment to mock the religious pretensions of the patronat.

Thus in 1894 the paper reported with mock indignation, that in one of the Roubaix Motte factories, "There exists something that we believe must be submitted to public opinion. There, the soigneuses must endure all the vexations that come from the imagination of a young idiot who is only 17 years old. Not one day passes when these women workers are not insulted by his brutalities. This young torturer is in the habit of taking the women by the shoulders in order to 'help' them, in an abominable manner." The director, whom the workers called "l'oiseau parfumé", supported this boy - even going so far as to menace those who objected. "If it is thus", the story concluded, "that M. Motte expects to reconcile his workers with the Christ who said "love one another", it is a strange way to propagate that doctrine!" 16

Thus did the Parti Ouvrier turn the paternalistic Catholicism of the mill owners back at them. But such opportunities for mockery were rare; the Catholic Church of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing was solidly in league with the patronat, and provided some of the most severe pressures with which workers and worker organisations had to contend.

Religious and Other Organisations

The Catholic patronat of the three cities employed three tactics in the struggle to impose religious controls on their textile workforce. First, they established and supported their own workers' organisations. Second, they utilised nuns and priests as spies, in and out of the mills. Third, they imposed a variety of religious practices within the factories themselves.

The earliest Catholic workers' _cercles_ grew out of patronal organisations which subscribed to a paternalistic social Catholicism. In 1887, L'Abbé Fichaux, the leader of the first such patronal group in Tourcoing, outlined their goals: "The duties of the patronat", he wrote, "are not limited to paying the workers an equitable, living wage. In the special name of charity, he owes them aid and protection. In the name of justice, he must do nothing, and allow nothing - within the limits of his authority - that would injure either their morals or their faith." [17]

Apparently the textile owners who joined such groups saw no contradiction between this statement of collective belief and their somewhat less principled behaviour toward workers. Their beliefs rarely led them to improve factory conditions in the mills or in the _courées_ and slums. Though neglectful of the

corporeal worker, however, they were committed to his or her spiritual health.

Thus in the years until the Third Republic's initial wave of anti-clericalism (from the end of the Empire to about 1885) produced effective anti-church legislation, many patrons established religious groups within their factories. For women, there were "Groupes du vingt" - usually several in each participating factory. For men, there were cercles catholique. These groups, led by three elected officers, existed to guard the morals of members. The women's groups, for example, collected fines of 20 centimes each time a member "sinned". A member could be accused by other members, or confess her sin herself. Funds collected in this manner paid for an annual banquet. By the late 1880s, both men's and women's groups were found in many of the largest textile factories, including Tiberghien, Dupréx-Lepers, Barrois-Lepers, Bayart-Parent, Sion, and Motte.[18] According to some workers in these mills, not to join was to risk losing "favoured worker" status, or even a job. [19]

After the 1884 law on syndicate prohibited organisers from mixing politics or religion with workers' organisations (which were legal only if they remained strictly economic) the patronat abolished these religious groups. In their place they founded "mixed"

syndicats - composed of both workers and owners. The members of these syndicats were encouraged, but not required, to affiliate with Catholic organisations outside the factory. The umbrella group for many of these mixed syndicats was Notre Dame de l'Usine, which had a men's section - St. Joseph - and a women's La Conception Immaculée. Rules for joining Notre Dame de l'Usine were similar to those for other Catholic workers' groups. Workers had to be 16, practising Catholics, and of good reputation (usually established by the recommendation of a local priest). Further, they had to agree to say, every day, three Ave Marias, and "Our Lady of the factory, pray for us". [20]

The men's and women's groups were organised by factory (though this was technically illegal) and led either by the patron himself or by female family members. Sub-groups of ten - the dizaines - were organised, led by a dizainier or dizainière chosen by the patron. These group leaders were held responsible for the behaviour and well-being of their members. Once a month they met with the patron to report on their groups, and to solicit aid - in the form of charitable visits by wives or nuns - for ill or incapacitated members.

The patronat may have viewed these groups as one means of discharging the religious obligations spelled out in Pope Leon XIII's encyclical, Rerum novarum. Workers on the whole, however, viewed their motives less sympathetically, frequently complaining that these groups were little more than an efficient means for enforcing factory discipline. Continued complaints about religious coercion appeared throughout the 1880s and 90s in the workers' press.[21] In 1887, Le Cri du Travailleur reported that more and more religion was being imposed in the factories. At Tiberghien frères, in Tourcoing, for example, workers were subjected to sermons and religious teaching almost every day. In addition, meetings of Catholic workers' groups held outside the factories were closely watched. Patronal spies checked attendance, and rewarded regular attenders with free food and drink.[22]

The recruitment process for these groups depended on economic pressure to persuade reluctant workers to join. The process normally began when a priest was invited to address the assembled workers of one mill. Both the patron himself and most supervisory personnel were usually present. At one Tourcoing factory, the meeting was scheduled at 8 on a Saturday night in 1887. Workers, at the end of their long work week, were forced to remain after hours, standing in one factory workroom (men on one side, women on the other) while

the priest extolled the virtues of joining Notre Dame de l'Usine. At the meeting's end, those workers who were not convinced, and who refused to join, were duly noted by factory staff. [23]

In addition to mixed syndicats and Catholic cercles, the textile owners sponsored "yellow" unions, which ostensibly were "workers only" and thus designed to appeal to workers who were reluctant to affiliate openly with the patronat.[24] The ties between most syndicats jaunes and the patronat were well-known in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing, however.[25] It was through such unions that the patronat hoped to influence those non-socialist workers whose class loyalty (or neighbours) prevented them from joining mixed syndicats.

Recruitment for these jaunes was cautious. "Immoral" workers were excluded, and women's branches were separated from men's. Leaders were careful to disavow any connection with the patronat. One woman leader admitted disingeniously that "in the beginning some wives of the patronat were involved with the group, because the working women, who were trying to organise, had asked for their advice". "Now," she added, "it is purely a workers' group."[26] Whatever the disavowals, however, the yellow syndicats normally leaned toward the patronat's side of every industrial dispute. Their journal, Le Petit Jaune, proseletysed continually

from 1901 to 1911 for industrial peace, an end to strikes, an end to all protective legislation (especially hour limitations and minimum ages for children), and with it, the abolition of the "hated" work inspectors. Furthermore, they called for an end to socialist unions, and public charity.[27]

While these jaune syndicats were openly supportive of the textile owners' positions on several issues, they were not openly religious. Instead, they recruited members by promising economic benefits - e.g. food cooperatives, savings and insurance schemes, free job placement services, and so on. Yellow propaganda repeatedly pointed to all the economic benefits offered by the jaunes, comparing them to the supposedly less profitable socialist ventures.

Moral strictures were added to membership requirements, as a special enticement to women workers. Only ouvrières of the highest character were allowed to join the various yellow unions or to participate in the various benefits. Thus, for example, those who wanted to join the maternity and illness insurance group, la Jeanne d'Arc, (founded in Tourcoing in 1902) had to prove themselves worthy, with recommendations from local clerics. The group promised members that no help would be given to women whose illnesses resulted from debauchery or intemperance, or participation in riots or

demonstrations. Further, the 10 franc indemnity promised to new mothers would be paid only to women who had been legally married at least eight months before the birth of their child. Marriage "livrets" were required as proof. Finally, any member could be expelled - forfeiting her dues - for "scandalous behaviour".[28] Clearly, the organisers believed that such moral requirements would be popular among the "better" (i.e. non-socialist) ouvrières, and they pointed to these restrictions with pride. They were doubtless also popular with the patronat, whose money and patronage supported many of the yellow syndicats' activities.

Despite widespread recruiting efforts backed by patronal pressures, yellow and mixed syndicats had little influence on the attitudes of the textile workforce of Lille and Roubaix. One historian, sympathetic to church-sponsored efforts to organise workers, noted that when class loyalties were tested by strikes, "yellow" workers usually walked out in solidarity with the "reds".[29] Léon de Seilhac, a witness to the 1901 general strike in the three cities noted the same class unity - a unity which overrode membership in any union, rouge or jaune.[30]

Prefectoral reports to the Third Republic's new Office du travail (founded in 1891) also reflected workers' indifference to patronal or Catholic organisations.

In 1893, the Nord prefect noted (with some pleasure) that patronal efforts to use mixed syndicats to pacify discontented workers with "cabarets, concerts, and theatricals" were failing. The only reason any workers joined such unions, the prefect concluded, was because they were forced to do so - and "to keep their mouths shut about it" - in order to keep their jobs. 31

Unlike Roubaix and Lille, Tourcoing, the smallest of the three cities, provided slightly more fertile ground for the jaunes. There, the latter's umbrella organisation, L'Union fédérale de tissage, established its headquarters in 1901. Furthermore, scattered records of yellow syndicats in our period show the majority located in Tourcoing. There were many such groups, becaue each union had a maximum of only thirty members - following the organisational form of the Groupes du vingt and dizaines of an earlier period. A large number of unions therefore did not necessarily represent a very substantial worker membership.

Even in Tourcoing, however, the membership of yellow and mixed syndicats remained small throughout our period. At the turn of the century there were only fifteen factories out of 139 in that city with mixed syndicats. Of the 6,500 workers employed in these factories, where pressure to join was heavy and continual, less than half (43%) belonged to the patronal

syndicat. These mixed syndicat members represented only 13% of the total Tourcoing workforce. Mixed syndicats found little success in Roubaix, either. In 1896, 5,488 workers (or 16%), out of the total textile workforce of 34,111, belonged to mixed syndicats. Moreover, of these Roubaisien workers who paid dues to mixed syndicats, only 1,606 participated in the affiliated Catholic workers' groups, such as Notre Dame de l'Usine. [32]

Despite the relatively feeble effects of these patronal efforts, many textile workers did join mixed or yellow syndicats. Probably some were sincere; others, however, doubtless succumbed to intense patronal pressure and joined simply in order to stay employed or to ease their lot in the daily routine of the workrooms.

The textile owners' formal organisational efforts, moreover, were less important in the daily lives of textile workers than the imposition of religion into the factory workrooms. Ouvrières were the particular targets of religious surveillance and proseletysing. They, more than men, were victims of the traditional moral double standard. Because in the eyes of the Church they were primarily mothers or potential mothers, their private lives became the focus of patronal and clerical attention. Many Catholic mill owners thought it their

duty to nurture and protect the moral sanctity of mothers. This belief in the special holiness of women as procreators was reflected in the choice of religious symbols in the textile mills. Images of Notre Dame de l'Usine were ubiquitous. Various women's groups were called "La Jeanne d'Arc", "La Conception Immaculée", "Les Mères chrétiennes", and so on. Factory prayers were addressed to the Virgin Mother.

The intensity of religious controls varied from factory to factory. Some owners expressed almost total indifference to the religious lives of their workers; others utilised the services of the Church and Church personnel whenever possible. Priests and nuns provided recommendations for "deserving" and "moral" workers. They recorded workers' attendance at mass and other church sacraments. They distinguished the legitimately married from unmarried couples - and further distinguished between those married by the Church and those married only by secular authorities. They ferreted out unmarried, pregnant girls, whose pregnancy often cost them their jobs.

Before the Third Republic disbanded most French congregations in 1901, nuns worked openly in the textile mills as forewomen, concièrges and supervisors. After 1901, many workers complained that the factory nuns simply removed their habits, called themselves "lay sisters" and stayed on.[33] One religious order was,

in fact, founded for the express purpose of providing factory supervision for textile ouvrières. The Petites Soeurs de l'ouvrier worked in textile mills of all three cities at the end of the nineteenth century. Their rule revealed the variety of pressures they applied to female textile workers. They were instructed to provide for the religious instruction of young ouvrières, to guard the morals of women workers, to visit the homes of sick workers - whether they belonged to Catholic groups or not - and to keep male and female workers separate as much as possible, particularly during meal or rest breaks. [34]

The 411 women who worked at Feron-Vrau at Lille in the 1880s were the focus of intense religious pressure directed by the Petites Soeurs who acted as their contre-dames on the shop floor.[35] Women and girls at Tiberghien frères in Tourcoing in the same period were also supervised by nuns. Moreover, these women were required to attend confession regularly as a condition of their employment. Their behaviour, both inside the factory and without, was closely watched. Thus Cri du Travailleur complained that any girl or woman working at Tiberghien who was seen keeping company with a young man was expected to marry him "soon after". If she did not, she risked losing her job. [36]

In 1904, the socialist workers syndicat of Roubaix, testifying before the parliamentary commission, protested

the widespread use of nuns as supervisors. One worker insisted that despite the 1901 law, they were still working in the mills, disguised as lay sisters. "See these little sisters," he added, "going from one machine to the other questioning the women thus: "How many children do you have? What school [Catholic or lay] do they attend? Do you go to mass?" (Apparently, talking to nuns during work was not prohibited by the factory rules.) These sisters also distributed rosaries and religious images to favoured ouvrières, "You might think," this witness added, "that any woman of spirit would rebel at this and leave such factories, but if she does, she is choosing to go without work and without bread." [37]

Representatives of the Lille workers' syndicat corroborated this testimony. They described a particularly close surveillance of ouvrières at Thiriez in Lille. In that mill, girls or women who were pregnant and unmarried were immediately fired: married women were fired if their babies were born sooner than nine months after the legal ceremony. Watchful nuns provided this kind of information to the patronat at Thiriez, as well as to patrons of many other Lille mills. [38]

The passage of time brought no relief from this type of religious surveillance, despite the formal, legal efforts of the Third Republic to break the hold of the

Church. In 1914 the Bonneff brothers' catalogue of Nord textile workers' miseries included "a patronal domination which extends both outside the factories and within, which demands the most tyrannical religious servitude". [39]

More than one textile factory had a chapel attached where workers - sometimes only the women - were forced to pray before and after work. Other owners forced workers to pray in the workrooms. Voix du peuple, the official journal of the Confédération générale du travail (CGT), reported in 1906 that one Roubaix factory required workers to go down on their knees on the stone floor twice a day to repeat: "Je vous salue Marie, pleine de grâce. Le Seigneur est avec vous". [40]

Religious imagery was prominently displayed in most textile factories. Figures of Notre Dame de l'Usine hung everywhere. Special niches for her image were constructed above the doors of many factory workrooms. [41] Beneath her image were the words, "Notre Dame de l'Usine, priez pour nous". More than once, this image provoked hostile reactions from workers. One group of strikers, for example, (rouges and jaunes together) painted a "Condamné à mort!" (sic) below the pious words. [42] So common were these images of Our Lady of the Factory in the three textile cities in 1914, that Marcelle Capy suggested that the rallying cry for the ouvrières of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing should be, "Sus! à Notre Dame de l'Usine!" [43]

Catholic newspapers - notably la Croix - were distributed in the factories; they were sometimes free, but more often sold for a few centimes. Catholic supervisors noted who bought them and who did not. Such purchases were an investment in better working conditions for some. On the other hand, those workers who read or bought workers' newspapers risked losing any factory privileges. More than one worker blamed a fine or even the loss of a job on the fact that he or she had been reading a socialist paper. So extensive was patronal spying that one worker remarked that only certain cabarets offered freedom from patronal surveillance; thus it is not surprising that these were commonly used for socialist meetings, and for distribution points for socialist papers and propaganda.[44]

The patronat's sophisticated surveillance methods and forced religious practices were no more successful in ensuring industrial peace than were their organisational efforts. Socialism and non-patronal syndicalism spread through Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing throughout the Belle Epoque. Both the Marxist Parti ouvrier and the socialist Fédération nationale des ouvriers textiles established major headquarters in Lille and "Red Roubaix" in this period. As we shall see in the next section, textile workers played major roles in both organisations: some women textile workers, moreover, combined socialism with feminism, and organised local

socialist feminist groups.

It is important to emphasise, however, the fact that women workers were the particular victims of patronal efforts to control the textile workforce as well as the focus of the legislative efforts of the Third Republic to ensure industrial tranquility during these years. Both these activities of the patronat and the laws of the republic had the effect of setting ouvrières, as a group, apart from male workers. Thus the security of women's employment depended to a much greater extent on their participation in religious and patronal activities. Furthermore, their morals, unlike those of the male workforce, were open to patronal scrutiny. From their earliest years, they were forced to guard their private lives lest they be branded "scandalous" or "debauched" by priests, nuns, or patronal spies. This was much less the case for male workers.

Protective legislation also served to alter relations between the sexes in the factories. For example, legislation which limited women's hours forced many ouvrières, paid by the piece, to accede to work speed-ups, which in part compensated for wages lost with shorter days. The occasional complaints of male workers that women were more "passive" in the face of such speed-ups were grounded in fact, therefore, though these men often misread economic necessity for willing acceptance of onerous changes in the work routine.

Taken together with the other factors which conditioned women textile workers' attitudes and behaviour - poverty, poor health, work accidents, and the special responsibilities of motherhood - these economic and religious pressures comprised the limited sphere within which pressures comprised the limited sphere within which textile ouvrières functioned during the Belle Epoque. This milieu was the context for women textile workers' political and economic activities - their strikes and demands, their unions, and the political attitudes and behaviour they developed through these years. With this context clearly in mind, it is now time to undertake an examination of the collective responses (political and other) of women textile workers to their economic and social conditions.

CHAPTER 5

ORGANISATIONS

Having painted the social and economic backdrop and introduced the protagonists, this thesis will next sketch in the scenery - that is, the organisations within which textile workers of both sexes expressed their growing economic and political grievances. In the years between 1880 and 1914, there were two types of organisation available - formal unions and political parties, and informal (though often political) groups. We shall begin with formal unions, attempting to explain in the process the vexing fact that most female textile workers chose not to join any of the textile workers' organisations in these decades before the First World War. Women, in fact, remained strikingly absent from the rolls of rank and file members, as well as from lists of syndical militants and union officers.

This problem is slightly less remarkable, however, if one notes that French textile workers of either sex were less than enthusiastic about joining syndicats.[1] In 1901, the CGT reported that 60% of miners, 31% of printers, 21% of metallurgical workers, 19% of leather workers and 11% of construction workers adhered to syndicats. This compared to only 9% of all textile workers.[2] Nevertheless, women were only a fraction of this small percentage.

A number of hypotheses suggest themselves as explanations for this greater absence of women. Some historians have suggested that women were predisposed to centre their attentions on non-work-related concerns, particularly those having to do with family welfare. It is also likely that patronal pressures, discussed above, played a part in discouraging women from risking blacklisting by joining a socialist syndicat. Further, their low wages, combined with poor health and onerous family responsibilities probably added to those factors discouraging active union membership.

The plausibility of these various hypotheses must be assessed by tracing a complex amalgam of social, political and economic factors. This section will, therefore, attempt a disaggregation of these, beginning with a description of the formal economic organisations available, and moving then to consider the extent and nature of women's particpation in them.

Economic Organisations Open to Women

In the early years, at least until the 1890s, organisational attempts, whether internal - as a response to particular industrial demands - or external - stemming from nationally-based movements of patrons and workers - were sporadic. Groups emerged, often in the heat of a strike, flourished for a time, and then died away. The day-to-day history of trade union

activity in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing in the 1880s is therefore a web of many tiny strands, difficult if not impossible to unravel completely. However, all such groups can be fitted into one of three general categories: independent syndicats, called 'jaunes',[3] mixed or owner-controlled syndicats, and socialist syndicats, called 'rouge'. The latter were openly socialist, and after 1890 tightly and permanently linked to the guesdists of the local Parti Ouvrier, particularly in the Fédération Nationale textile ouvrière, headquartered in Roubaix.

A few independent syndicats were founded in the Nord between 1890 and 1892,[4] but their major growth awaited the turn of the century.[5] After 1900, patronal fears of the growing strength of the appeal of the Parti Ouvrier to the textile workforce (stimulated by its electoral victories in Roubaix and Lille in the 1890s), combined with the dual hostility of many workers to both the strict political control of the Parti Ouvrier and the religious control of the patronat, setting the stage for the foundation of several such independent unions. Virtually all the founding statutes of these jaunes emphasised their independence from both religion and politics.[6]

The jaunes, however, enjoyed relatively little influence on the total textile workforce of the three cities. In Lille, in 1906, there were three yellow

textile syndicats, with 1500 members of both sexes, a very tiny percentage of the total workforce.[7] The figures were not broken down by sex. In Roubaix in the same year there were at least two yellow textile unions, which probably included some 400 women in a total membership of 1720.[8] The larger of the two unions, the Syndicat des Ouvriers des industries textiles réunies de Roubaix, was heir to Catholic workers' cercles of the earlier years, the most important of which was Notre Dame de l'Usine. Many members may have joined as a result of that coercion exercised by the textile mill owners which in previous decades had pushed them into such cercles. Furthermore, because this group included employees and supervisorial personnel as well as workers, it is impossible to know the proportion of the latter in the total.

Not surprisingly, it was in Catholic Tourcoing that the jaunes found most of their support. By 1906, there were about 100 small syndicats jaunes, each with about 30 members. These, too, duplicated the form of the small, easily-controlled groups of the old Catholic cercles. The umbrella organisation, the Fédération syndicale de l'industrie tourquennoise, claimed 3000 members in 1906, 60% of them women.[9] The roundness of this figure suggests some distortion - perhaps the source, Maurice Petitcollet, simply assumed that each

group had its full complement of 30 members and accepted the syndicat's count of 100 such groups. Prefectoral reports for the period, on the other hand, though lacking much detail, suggest many fewer such groups. Taken together, these reports mention only about 145 female *jaune* members.[10] One recent historian of syndicalism in Roubaix and Tourcoing has concluded that these many tiny syndicats had little noticeable effect on workers' lives.[11] And even given the most optimistic membership figures - 6,220 in 1906, it is difficult to dissent from this view, given also that there were at least 130,000 workers in the mills in that year.

In addition to noting the *jaune*'s lack of impact, it is important to observe that women members did not form anything more than a seemingly unimportant minority, despite the overwhelmingly Catholic character of these organisations. Thus in this instance, the belief, as common then as today, that women were more likely than men to act on the church's guidance was patently false.[12]

Textile workers were also encouraged to join mixed syndicats in these years, though such groups rarely flourished after the 1890s. They had a longer history than the *Jaunes*, having been founded, sometimes as *cercles*, even before the 1884 legislation allowed them to be called syndicats.[13] However, *ouvriers* and *ouvrières* alike resisted their appeal, and they had

almost no success organising in the mills of these three cities.[14]

When textile workers, male or female, did join a syndicat in this region, it was most often a syndicat rouge. And it is arguable that even when they did not join a syndicat rouge, most textile workers in the POF strongholds of Lille and Roubaix, and many in the less-socialist Tourcoing, were affected by the compelling presence of the hydra-headed national federation of textile unions, which acted both as an arm of the CGT (after 1895) and of the locally powerful Parti Ouvrier Français (SFIO after 1905).

The first socialist textile syndicat was founded, appropriately, in 'red Roubaix', in 1872, when two textile workers, Henri Carette and Achilles Lepers, founded the Chambre Syndicale Ouvrière de Roubaix.[15] In addition, socialist sections were organised in the textile mills - no doubt to counter the influence of the Catholic workers' cercles of that era. By 1884, when such groups were permitted to announce themselves openly, Lille had sixteen socialist sections or groups, Roubaix fifteen and Tourcoing six. These groups held regular discussion nights, where common topics, according to one report, were property, capital, religion and family.[16] These discussion groups were usually simply disguised syndicats. By 1882 at least eleven such syndicats had been founded

in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing, despite legislative prohibition.[17] Some of these vanished almost as quickly as they had begun, but some remained and would eventually unite in 1893 to join the socialist Fédération nationale textile headed by Victor Renard (and based in Roubaix).

During the 1890s, the first Roubaix syndicat came to dominate the Nord textile federation. As it gathered several smaller groups into itself, it adopted a new, and characteristically cumbersome name: the Chambre syndicale de l'industrie textile de Roubaix, Tourcoing, Mouveaux, Wattrelos et environs. This group aroused special police attention. In 1891 the commissariat central in Roubaix informed the prefect that this group comprised 5000 members, was clearly in the hands of the POF, and was working hard in the upcoming municipal election.[18] This electoral activity paid off when one of the founding fathers of that syndicat, Carette, joined a socialist majority on Roubaix's municipal council (where Achille Lepers, the other founder, was already sitting).[19] Carette would become the first socialist mayor of Roubaix and at the same time continued to lead the syndicat into the opening years of the present century.

Despite the police estimate of membership, the syndicat, now shortened to Chambre syndicale ouvrière textile, claimed only 2000 members in 1893.[20] Only

in 1896, after unifying with the socialist workers' syndicats of Tourcoing, did it claim the 5000 members attributed to it five years earlier.[21]

Lille's largest syndicat rouge - also burdened with a cumbersome name, the Chambre syndicale ouvrière de l'industrie textile à Lille et environs - was founded in the same years, with some 1200 members.[22] Thus, taken together, the major 'red' unions in the three cities ended the decade with about 6500 members. In addition there were other, smaller, red unions in all three cities which chose not to merge with the larger organisations.

In 1895 the national (left) workers' movement unified - "pell mell", in the words of Georges Lefranc[23] - to form the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT). The socialist textile unions of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing joined the new organisation, though their simultaneous adherence to the Second International and to the local POF clearly flouted the a-political stance of the CGT. The textile workers remained in the CGT, however, persistently attempting to alter its policy of non-participation in politics, until the Amiens Congress of 1906, where Victor Renard provoked a showdown over the issue which resulted in the defeat and subsequent withdrawal from active participation of his Fédération nationale de l'industrie textile.[24]

The extent of women textile workers' official participation in these socialist syndicats is difficult to assess. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century membership figures existed only for the major unions of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing. Many of the smaller unions were evanescent creatures, born in strikes and disappearing shortly thereafter. Moreover, until the turn of the century, none of the available figures broke membership down by sex.

After 1900, however, some estimates of the number of women members became available. And not surprisingly, the numbers were small.[25] Thus, for example, in 1900 the unified Chambre syndicale ouvrière textile of Roubaix and Tourcoing claimed 6000 members. Of these, only 200 were women.[26] After the 1904 general strike in the Nord's textile industry that number grew to 800 women out of 6000, with women the fastest growing constituency.[27] By 1909 the union had 1,250 women out of 6,250 members.[28]

In Lille, on the other hand, total textile union membership was lower, but the proportion of women higher. Thus the Chambre syndicale there reported in 1905 that it had 245 women out of 887 members.[29] Even more women belonged to the union which represented spinners of flax, hemp and jute (occupations in which women were heavily concentrated). The Chambre syndicale ouvrière de fil de lin, chanvre et jute de Lille reported 400 members in 1906, 266 (or 67%) of them women.[30]

Some of the Tourcoing textile syndicats that did not merge in 1893 with Carette's Roubaix organisation unified later, in 1909. The Nord prefectoral reports on this group vary in the names they attach to it, though after unification it was generally referred to as the Chambre syndicale textile unitaire de Tourcoing et environs (which later, after 1921, would adhere to the Communist CGTU). There was only one reference to women in the reports on this group, suggesting that in 1909 the union claimed 900 members, of whom only 50 were women.[31]

Clearly, most ouvrières were less likely than their male counterparts to join a union in the Belle Epoque.[32] Their collective economic behaviour, like that of women all over France (and elsewhere in the industrial nations of Europe and North America[33]) did tend to stop at the point of paying dues to a syndicat. The explanations for this pose questions addressed by a number of recent historians. Some have noted male workers' hostility to women and adduced the result.[34] Others have suggested that women's primary concern with the family inhibited the development of larger, 'public' concerns.[35] Others still have argued in favour of a more or less subtle theory of patriarchy, purporting to demonstrate that women's subordination to men began early in life and its effects continued to appear in such situations as the organisation of unions presented. However, it seems

wisest to assume that none of these accounts necessarily serves for the problem as it occurred in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing in this period, and to look at the variety of push and pull factors that influenced female textile workers to join or not to join a textile syndicat.

Reasons for Joining

Mixed syndicats, as we have seen, were remarkably unsuccessful in organising women textile workers in this area, as elsewhere in France. In January 1908, there were 116,652 women in syndicats of one type or another in France, and only 12,028 in mixed unions. By 1911 this figure had dropped to 7372.[36]

In the Lille area, women were offered three incentives to join mixed syndicats: religious succour[37] (and the approval of local clerics, requisite for some types of charitable aid); insurance against illness, maternity and unemployment; job security. [38]

Conversely, women suffered discrimination in these mixed syndicats. Two of the largest Christian textile syndicats in Roubaix and Tourcoing, for example, prohibited women from taking part in general meetings or in syndical administration.[39] Furthermore, the sociétés de secours mutuels which existed contiguous to these mixed syndicats provided women with less aid than for the men. For example, men of St. Joseph provided

sick members with an indemnity of 12 francs per week for thirteen weeks, while women got half that. In Notre Dame, men received 9 francs per week, women half that amount. In both groups male and female members paid the same weekly dues of 15 centimes (matched by the patron's 10 centimes per week).[40]

Discrimination, taken alone, cannot serve as the explanation for women's low participation in mixed syndicats, however, since similar types of discrimination existed in both yellow and red syndicats which women - like their male counterparts - tended to join in greater numbers. It is more likely that the general failure of mixed syndicats was instead due to widespread hostility among textile workers of both sexes to patronal pressure - particularly as it was applied through religious institutions in these cities (see Chapter 4).

Yellow unions found more success in organising textile workers. In this area there were three types of jaunes: those which were genuinely independent of both owners and guesdists; a few that were independent Catholic women's syndicats (the others were mixed male and female); those which were little more than front groups for the textile patronat.

Although many historians have assumed that 'jaunes' always implied some political control or interference,[41] some of these syndicats in Lille and Roubaix were genuinely independent. In the years after 1890, when

syndicat rouge meant, in effect, syndicat Parti Ouvrier, many workers chose non-political unions with exclusively economic goals, an emphasis which these groups thus shared with the 'revolutionary' CGT.[42] In addition to demonstrating thereby an aversion to the marked political emphasis of the 'reds', Catholic workers who chose independent syndicats were also electing to avoid the vigorous anti-clericalism of the guesdists.

These non-socialist workers' unions commonly followed the pattern established by the founders of the rouges, and created various ancillary sections offering practical benefits to members. In 1904, Leon de Seilhac noted that the independent syndicats of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing provided the following benefits to members: i) an office of information about welfare and other forms of aid available to workers; ii) frequent popular meetings and communal activities; iii) a free placement bureau for members; iv) legal aid; v) a savings society (including a group designed to help female workers save dowries); vi) an insurance scheme for conscripts; vii) health and unemployment insurance; viii) a société d'habitations à bon marché; ix) two consumer cooperatives - l'Indépendante and La Grande Brasserie.[43]

Such benefits would clearly have interested male and female workers alike, especially if equally distributed. However, it is not clear whether women suffered discrimination in the allocation of benefits or for that

matter in the administration of these unions when they were male and female mixed, though there is no reason to suppose that these groups were any different in this respect from the other mixed-sex textile unions of the region.

In addition to the mixed-sex jaunes, there were the independent women's textile unions which belonged to the (national) Assemblée générale des syndicats des femmes, a Christian syndical organisation which became part of the CFTC after 1919. This national organisation was founded in 1903 by Marie-Louise Rochebillard in Lyon,[44] and had the express purpose of organising women as women workers and as Catholics. It was, according to Jean Maîtron, a reform-minded group which tried hard to practice the dictates of Rerum Novarum.[45]

It is not easy to discover the extent of this movement's success among women textile workers in the Lille region, though certainly at least some women needleworkers' groups joined the umbrella organisation. The absence of archival data suggests that their success was minimal. However, there exists a list of the statutes of one such women's union in Tourcoing, which shows it to have been carefully organised and tightly-controlled. The statutes emphasise avoiding 'general strikes' and using, whenever possible, arbitration in preference to open confrontation. However, when conflict did occur, members were expected to behave with total

solidarity: "Toute ouvrière syndiquée qui ne cesserait pas le travail ou le reprendrait avant ses camarades," read article 23, "n'aura droit à aucune indemnité; elle serait immédiatement rayée des contrôles du syndicat et sera considerée comme traître à la cause des travailleuses." The next article added: "Les ouvrières syndiquées qui prendraient le travail d'ouvrières en grève seront impitoyablement chassées du syndicat".[46]

This particular women's union cost 50 centimes to join and then 20 centimes per week. Membership was open to all working women over 16 years. In case of strikes, members received 1 fr. 50 per day and "fille ou femme" who gave birth received a 15 franc indemnity. There were no moral restrictions on members, except for the bland statement that they must be of "good repute". No mention was made, for example, of whether ouvrières had to be married in order to receive the maternity benefits, though this was perhaps taken for granted in a Catholic women's union. The officers of the union ranged from 26 to 38 years of age.

Such unions did sometimes appear within the textile factories, though they were short-lived in the Lille region. One writer observed in 1912 that a large number of such women's syndicats, including "numerous syndicats of Tourcoing fileuses and Lille repasseuses-lessiveuses" had vanished in the previous five years.[47]

The only women's jaunes that continued right the

way through the pre-war years were those linked to the Tourcoing-based Union Fédérale du Tissage. Like other such umbrella groups elsewhere, the Union was not independent (though claiming to be) but was instead little more than a substitute for openly patronal mixed syndicats in Tourcoing. The women's groups, moreover, were entirely administered by the male leadership of the Union, and therefore constituted little more than a woman's auxiliary. In fact, on one key issue, the 10 hour day for women and children, these women's groups of the Union took a position contrary to that of the Assemblée générale des syndicats des femmes (see above). The latter - composed, of course, solely of women workers - supported the protective legislation, though demanding that shorter hours not result in reduced wages and threatening bitter conflicts if this happened.[48] The persistently conciliatory Union, however, launched a protest against the legislation, demanding an 11 hour day for all workers (who, paid by the piece, could thus earn more).[49]

Among the jaunes, furthermore, only those groups that were genuinely independent and exclusively female appealed to women in their capacity as ouvrières, rather than as women, or specifically as wives, mothers or sisters of workers. Thus more often than not women workers recieved no mention at all at meetings of the various jaunes, where they were usually forbidden

active participation. At the Congrès ouvrier held in Lille in 1895, for example, which required that those attending either belong to the Union or else proclaim the three principles of 'religion, family and private property', there was typically no mention of women at all, and all speeches were addressed to "hommes". In the same year, at a meeting of another yellow syndicat, La Vraie France, one male delegate enquired whether "women and foreigners" would be allowed to vote in the Chambre du travail then being organised. No one replied to the question about women. Foreigners - in this case referred to as "greedy German Jews" - were restricted. [50]

Instead of concerning themselves with ouvrières, then, most yellow syndicats of the period referred and addressed themselves to "mères", "filles" or "femmes". In the propaganda of these organisations, women were instructed, threatened and cajoled to be "good" and "dutiful" mothers and wives about everything. At one jaune conference in Tourcoing in 1894 at which women were present, one man attacked socialism as leading to "liberated" femmes. He predicted, "Le soir, après une journée de fatigues, quand nous (and here he means male workers) rentrerons le foyer sera désert, nous ne retrouverons plus ces chers petits enfants que nous aimons plus que nous-mêmes. Peut-être trouverons-nous une femme qui demain nous quittera si ses caprices le lui demandent". [51] The unlikelihood of this state of affairs,

given that female mill workers literally could not survive on their own resources, much less support these "dear little ones", aroused no laughter; instead, the words of this ouvrier found echoes in the propaganda of other jaunes, as well as in some syndicats rouges, as we shall see. [52]

Often, and ironically, this Proudhonien image of women was presented side-by-side with notices of women on strike or women protesting against factory conditions. [53] Thus between 1901 and 1914 l'Union Fédérale's journal, Le Petit Jaune, featured articles on how to educate girls to be good housewives - to "clean, cook, buy, repair and wash". [54] One feuilleton, La Vie Ouvrière-scènes du ménage, aimed directly at women, featured two housewives, one the mother of a yellow syndiqué, the other the wife of a syndiqué rouge. In each issue the two discussed the advantages of the yellow syndicats, particularly the economic benefits offered by the Unions, consistently portrayed as superior to those offered by the socialist syndicats. [55]

This mode of propaganda, and the organisation of women into auxiliary units, however, apparently held little attraction for the majority of women. [56] In fact, all the yellow syndicats together, including the women's groups, never had more than 2,500 female members (at the outside) in the peak years 1901-1914. [57] In the same period there were some 70,000 female textile workers in the three cities.

For this very tiny minority of women who belonged to the jaunes, there were probably four motives for joining. To summarise: firstly, the fact that the highest jaune membership of either sex was in Tourcoing, where patronal pressure was high and most consistently applied to the textile workforce, suggests that many workers joined to obtain or keep their jobs. Furthermore, patronal participation in these groups meant that the economic benefits available to worker members were greater - prices at the Union's Société de consommation, for example, were lower than those at the socialist cooperatives.[58] Secondly, as noted above, some workers had religious motives for joining a union other than those run by the socialists. Thirdly, and this must not be overlooked, many women workers preferred to join all-female unions and did so, in spite of the difficulties inherent in running and financing groups of the lowest paid, most exploited and least educated workers. Finally, many workers of both sexes were hostile to the firm control exercised by the POF over the red syndicats, and chose not to join organisations with primarily political, rather than economic goals. Conversely, among the factors which might have prevented workers in general and women workers in particular from joining a yellow syndicat were (again, in summary) long-standing worker hostility to patronal pressures; pressure from socialist co-workers not to join (pressure which included,

according to one complaint, the sabotaging of yellow workers' machines during work hours in some factories); in the case of women, the general hostility of male members in the yellow syndicats towards female participation in the decision-making or administrative processes of the unions.[59]

An analysis of the appeal of the syndicats rouges of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing must necessarily take into account the highly political nature of the socialist syndical movement in the Lille arrondissement during the generation before the war. There can be no history of this workers' movement entirely separate from a history of the POF; since the history of the latter will be treated in some detail later, what follows in necessarily abbreviated and incomplete, intended primarily for comparison with the analysis of the appeal of other syndical organisations.

Straightforward economic benefits offered by socialist unions, always in conjunction with the POF, were broadly similar to those offered by the jaunes. These included consumer cooperatives, free legal counselling, libraries, maternity benefits and benefits for illness, unemployment and conscription. In addition, at least one group, the giant Chambre Syndicale Ouvrière textile de Roubaix et environs (with 6000 members in 1906 of whom 800 were women) provided funds for "work designed to prevent factory accidents".[60]

During strikes, benefits paid varied by syndicat,

though in the general strike in the industry in 1909 socialist workers got 12 francs per week compared to 15 francs for jaunes (non-unionised workers received 2.50 francs per week from the common funds of both rouges and jaunes who were united for the purposes of the strike).[61] During the strike, both members of either organisation who belonged to their union received two-thirds of their food free.

Socialist syndicats were less likely than jaunes to discriminate in paying benefits, though sometimes women paid lower dues and received commensurately smaller benefits.[62] Thus the Chambre Syndicale ouvrière de fil de lin, chanvre et jute de Lille et environs charged men 50 centimes per month and women only 30 centimes, paying strike benefits of 1.50 francs for men, 1 franc for women. On the other hand, the Chambre Syndicale Ouvrière Textile de Roubaix et environs charged everyone 25 centimes per week and paid equal benefits. The union most generous towards ouvrières was the Chambre Syndicale ouvrière de l'industrie textile de Lille et environs which charged men 1 franc per month and women 60 centimes, but paid out identical benefits.[63] Similarly, on the issue of the 10 hour day, the various syndicats rouges, in contrast to the yellow Union, supported shorter hours for women, though they added two additional demands: that the legislation be extended to include all workers, and that it be for an 8, not a 10, hour work day.[64]

Still, discrimination against women workers did exist in the red unions. The statutes of at least three of the earliest of them included, in the seventies and early eighties, discriminatory strictures. This provision was typical: women attached to a Roubaix factory would "...be admitted to the benefits of the Chambre Syndicale. But they may address observations or propositions to the Chambre Syndicale only in writing and by the intermediary of two male members".[65] (This wording was still to be found in the statutes of 1890, after this early Roubaix group had grown into the Chambre syndicale de l'industrie textile de Roubaix, Tourcoing et environs.)[66]

Despite these rather forbidding words, however, male socialist unionists were not generally hostile to women, even in the early years of the movement when such statutes were drafted. Le Forçat, the POF's Roubaix journal in 1882 and 1883, consistently addressed syndical announcements to both men and women; invitations to organisational meetings at local estaminets were simiarly addressed to "ouvriers et ouvrières", or "citoyens et citoyennes".[67]

Furthermore, the POF's uncompromising stand against sex discrimination,[68] began to affect socialist syndicats as they drew closer to the party (as if to make the point even clearer than it had been in the Party's original statutes, Le Forçat on March 4th, 1883, suddenly altered

its logo from "Considérant que l'émancipation de la classe productive est celle de tous les êtres humains sans distinction de race" to read "sans distinction de sexe ni de race".[69] This wording remained on the heading until the paper's demise in July 1883, and was repeated in the various socialist newspapers which succeeded it).

By the 1890s, most blatantly anti-female statutes had been eliminated from syndicats rouges in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing. By 1909, the stated goal of the Chambre syndicale ouvrière textile de Tourcoing et environs was "to represent, defend and protect all textile workers in particular, and all workers in general, sand distinction de sexe, de race ou de nationalité". 70 In that same year a writer compared mixed, yellow and red syndicats in the three cities and remarked that among the last-named, the collectivists, she could find "pas d'hostilité malsaine contre le travail de la femme". 71

Consistent with this decreasing hostility towards women workers was the fact that socialist syndicats normally addressed their propaganda to ouvrières rather than to ménagères. The nature of this propaganda will be discussed in a later chapter but it is important to note here that not once in the years under discussion did the newspapers of the POF in the three cities argue in favour of the return of women to the home, even in the years when such arguments were being advanced in the

national socialist and CGT press.[72] Furthermore, public meetings held by the various red syndicats in the region frequently featured speakers whose topic was the problems of working women.[73] And in place of the 'advice to housewives' of the jaunes' newspaper, socialist journals printed a variety of stories and announcements concerned with women's work conditions, including, e.g., protests against sexual harassment on the mill floor, against patronal religious pressures on women, against the patrons' active indifference to hour and safety legislation designed to protect ouvrières.[74]

In short, the official pronouncements of the various socialist syndicats of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing supported the view of Marie-Louise Compain who concluded her observations of these syndicats in the textile industry in 1910 with these words:

> Cependant aucune figure de militante ne se détache encore en traits saillants, dussent-ils être farouches, sur cette armée de femme astreintes a un dure labeur dans les peignanges malsains et les filatures surchauffées. Mais peut-être est-ce dans cette patrie du travail et de la lutte, ou l'ouvrier et l'ouvrière vivent et peinent côte à côte que l'organisation syndicale féminine est appelée au plus grand essor? Dans ces cités brumeuses, entrainée dans la melée économique, l'ouvrière n'est plus, comme la modiste ou la petite main parisienne, distraite par mille attraits. Elle est vraiment la compagne de son camarade ouvrier et n'a pas appris à mépriser sa blouse ou ses main durcies, pour rêver à l'étudiant ou au petit employé dont l'amour passager fera d'elle une 'dame'![75]

For women, then, the contrast between the jaunes - with the possible exception of the evanescent women's Christian syndicats - and the rouges, was clear. In the one she was appealed to in her biological role as mother, wife and daughter of male workers, whatever her actual function in the textile industry. In the other she was accepted, at least at the local level and albeit with occasional hesitation, as a worker among other workers, concerned with work-related issues as well as with her family. This is not to say that the syndicats rouges maintained any sort of revolutionary ideas about, e.g., shared domestic labour...but in the 1880s and 1890s at least their views jibed with the reality of life in these textile cities.

* * * *

Informal Organisations

All three kinds of textile syndicats available in the Nord in the Belle Epoque offered both positive and negative incentives to those eligible to join them. Nevertheless, the fact remains that few textile workers of either sex did join these organisations. This apparent indifference to unions was not indicative of an 'anti-collective' spirit, however. On the contrary, the Flamandes were notable for their communal esprit which was, if anything, encouraged in the Lille area by close living and working conditions. Flemish workers in

general were famous for their sociability, their love of essentially collective activities, including games, singing, fêtes, dancing, theatre groups and puppet shows.[76] Even the most miserable districts had a 'local' where workers met most evenings for a glass of gin or beer, a bit of singing, and more often than not a political discussion. It was this sociability, in fact, that provided the Parti Ouvrier with its organisational base: from early on the socialists utilised this collective spirit to organise a variety of women's groups. Their history is not easy to discover; evidence is thin, references disjointed and scattered over time. Membership figures are non-existent. Nonetheless it is clear that such groups did exist, and that they had a significant effect on the reforms instituted by the socialist municipalities of Lille and Roubaix in the 1890s.

Roubaissiennes, always the most militant, pioneered women's associations. Thus it was in Roubaix that the first traces of what were called 'socialist-feminist' groups were to be found.[77] They originated just after the national congress of the Parti Ouvrier, held in Roubaix in the early spring of 1884. At that meeting, local women were represented by two mixed sex groups - Le Groupe l'Egalité de Roubaix and Le Groupe l'Emancipation de Roubaix. These split soon thereafter into two exclusively female socialist groups (it should be noted that Roanne preceded Roubaix in this development and sent

the only purely female group, l'Union des femmes socialistes, to that congress).[78] Between their founding in 1884 and 1895 these societies multiplied to include at least six groups, among them Le Groupe l'Emancipation (probably the first), le Groupe la Révanche des femmes socialistes de l'Epeule,[79] le Groupe des femmes de Ste. Elizabeth,[80] les Femmes socialistes de Fontenoy,[81] and les Droits des Femmes.[82] Because of the greater cohesion and early electoral success of the Parti Ouvrier in Roubaix, these various women's groups were more obvious there than in Lille or Tourcoing. The local press regularly announced their meetings, and their presence permeated local socialist activity throughout the 1890s.

The Lille story is slightly different. The first Lille group was probably the Comité des femmes de Lille, founded in the early 1890s and headed by Maria Devernay [83] (some women in this group may have belonged to an earlier group, la Libre-Pensée de Lille [84] which had an active female contingent). This Comité des femmes quickly became an umbrella group (occasionally misspelled 'la Fédération féminine lilloise' by police spies[85]) for several smaller groups organised by quartier. These groups apparently did not adopt the militatn titles of their Roubaix colleagues, contenting themselves instead with the names of their districts. Their weekly meetings, held at night, met either in local estaminets or in

members' homes.[86]

In Tourcoing the local press makes no mention of local women's groups at all during the nineties. Tourcoing's female socialism seems to have been all but dormant. No Libre-Pensées sent out calls for 'citoyennes', as they did in both Lille and Roubaix in the eighties and nineties. No militant 'Women's Revenge' appeared. Not until January 1894, in fact, was there any mention at all of socialist women in the Tourcoing press. On the 27th of that month, a meeting was held in the city at which Paule Minck spoke. Four hundred people attended, among them a girl who presented Minck with a bouquet "au nom des femmes socialistes tourquennoises". The reporter of this event continues: "...et par un compliment très bien tourné (elle) dit alors que les femmes socialistes n'aspirent qu'au bonheur et qu'elles perséveront dans nos idées en faisant de nouvelles adhérentes".[87]

Some months later, the socialist female working population of Tourcoing made one last appearance in the press, when Le Travailleur reported that among the the delegates to the 12th national congress of the POF at Nantes in 1894 was one group called 'Les Ouvrières Textiles de Tourcoing'.[88]

These various socialist women's groups were, in themselves, short-lived, lost by the end of the nineties

and not rediscovered until 1913. Thus, by the 15th national POF congress in 1897, no women's groups were represented.[89] Apparently this absence reflected a decline in interest at the local level as well, since a police spy reported a vain attempt in Lille in the same year to "reanimate" what he called the "Fédération féminine lilloise" by citoyenne Reville of the Parti Ouvrier.[90] This was the last mention of such groups until 1913, when a call to the "Femmes socialistes de Lille" appared in a Paris socialist feminist newspaper.[91]

These later initiatives had an entirely different character from those of the eighties and nineties, however. They reflected the rediscover of women workers by the SFIO, an event explained in part by the latter's awareness of the CGT's campaign to organise ouvrières, and by pressure brought to bear on French socialists by the Second International's active women's movement. The SFIO's women's groups were in no way autonomous (no women could join the nationally organised Groupe des femmes socialistes unless they were paid up members of the SFIO). They were, in essence, formally organised auxiliaries of the mainstream national party. Further, they had lost all 'feminist' character - a change symbolised by the loss of their militant names - and were organised solely for the purpose of participation in the class struggle.

The fortunes of textile ouvrières in the French socialist movement thus waxed and waned, reaching a high point during the POF's heyday and declining rapidly thereafter. This intriguing cycle will be discussed in detail in a later chapter. Nevertheless, it is worth noting here that women workers benefitted from official socialist attention during those early years when the Parti Ouvrier was focussing its energies on such local and informal organisations (where vast numbers of female workers could not very well be ignored) and lost ground as the spotlight turned to the national stage, where the various socialist parties struggled towards unification.

Of these early women's groups in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing, then, little is known. It is, for example, frustratingly impossible to discover the actual number of members of these various small local groups. It is unlikely that they attracted more than a handful of members, but even that is an informed guess. Most reports of their activities mention only "a lot" or "many" women, to the infinite frustration of the quantifying historian.[92]

The precise numbers involved, though, is less important in the long run than the effects of such groups on local political attitudes and behaviour. It will be

argued in the chapters to follow that the activities of groups such as these were highly visible at certain moments, and that they, like other socialist activities in the three cities, had a crucial effect on the growth and spread of socialism, and on the development in the French socialist movement of a coherent response to women's issues within the working class. At the same time, however, such groups followed the more general tendency of the nationwide workers movement - syndical and socialist alike - to focus on issues other than those of primary importance to female industrial workers. In the process, working women were lost from the movements in the years between 1895 and 1905. And when the two movements - socialism and syndicalism - rediscovered them, in a flourish of applause and (in the case of the SFIO) fresh theoretical arguments, the women reacted with even more indifference than they had evicned in the earlier phase.

Before turning, then, to the view from the top - i.e., to a discussion of official syndicalist and socialist policies towards women workers - it is all the more important to try to discern just what issues <u>were</u> of primary concern to our protagonists. In order to do this it is now necessary to move from a (static) description of the formal background of political and economic organisations to a (dynamic) account of the

collective activities of the ouvrières themselves in the period 1880 to 1914, begining with the strikes in which they engaged in these years.

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CHAPTER 6

ON STRIKE: 1880-1890

Three elements characterised textile strikes throughout the Belle Epoque. Firstly, by striking, male and female textile workers were responding to similar problems, in similar ways and armed with similar demands. Except for a heightened frequency of all-female strikes in the two periods immediately following protective legislation (1892, 1903-4), which occurred because women's wages were lowered along with their hours, and two anomalous strikes occasioned by patronal threats to hire women to replace men (in 1899 and 1906), no typical 'male' or 'female' pattern can be discerned. Secondly, most strikes were mixed until 1906, when textile ouvrière's militancy began to dissipate. Thirdly, the formal response of organisations to women workers on strike itself fell into three distinct periods: between 1880 and the mid-90s, women acted as an integral part of the workers' movement, and were accepted as such by political and economic organisations. After 1895 and until 1905 women's behaviour and organisational responses to them diverged - during this period women's participation in mixed-sex strikes and community activities increased, while at the same time official groups ignored them. Finally, after 1905, the female half of the textile proletariat was rediscovered

by both the SFIO and CGT, though this time they were viewed primarily as an auxiliary to the male workers. Thus it was that at the peak of women workers' strike militance - the ten years surrounding the turn of the century - socialists and syndicalists failed to capitalise on that militance; and thus a key opportunity to organise women workers passed.

This chapter and Chapter 8 will examine these strands in the strike history of textile workers, focussing first on two major mass strikes, in 1880 and 1890. There then follows a discussion of strikes in the transitional period in the years around the turn of the century (roughly 1890-1906), and lastly a narrative account of strikes between 1906 and the outbreak of war in 1914.

The first stirrings of what rapidly became the biggest textile strike of the nineteenth century began, appropriately, in Roubaix, in the early spring of 1880. A few weavers, at Mm Delattre père et fils, walked out, demanding a pay rise.[1] They soon returned to work, but within a few weeks their initiative was taken up factory by factory. By April 1880, twelve Roubaix mills were closed and 25,000 workers were on strike. A new demand - for a 10 hour day - was added. The movement then spread across the canal to Tourcoing and down the

roads out of Roubaix to Lille, Houplines, Armentières.

Why did the great Nord textile strike break out in 1880? The prefect's account of the strike, written in June of that year at the peak of agitation, offers one persuasive explanation. After the war of 1870-71, he wrote, the textile industry prospered, especially in Roubaix. Pay was relatively high. Then, in 1876, crisis struck. Pay fell, hours decreased. Because the quality of raw material also dropped, working it was harder and slower. Fines for bad work increased. Finally, as demand slumped further, the patronat agreed among themselves to slow the work process, e.g. by delaying delivery of fresh materials to workers who had completed a task, thereby lowering wages (usually paid by the piece) while at the same time permitting factory owners to maintain their work forces intact. This process, frustrating to workers anxious to keep up a pace, in turn necessitated stricter factory discipline, and supervisory personnel and rules were increased.

In the meantime, one event stimulated the idea of resistance among the workers: this was the last of the three workers' congresses held in 1879, to which Roubaix sent delegates. Then, when work began to pick up in May 1879, workers, primed by ideas of economic resistance to the patronat, claimed their share in this upswing by demanding wage rises.

The patronat, anxious to recoup the losses of the bad years, turned a deaf ear. Sporadic agitation increased, as did isolated incidents of violence. Finally strikes broke out and spread rapidly. One further insight into this background to the strike comes from the Roubaix reported for Le Temps. He believed that the strikes were an inevitable explosion of the misery in which textile workers lived. In the mills, he wrote, "la vie n'est en quelque sorte, qu'une longue assimilation à la machine". 2

Whatever the short- or long-term causes, by early April of 1880 Roubaix's textile workforce was on strike. Their first massive demonstrations were held at Ballon, on the Belgian border, where workers were just out of reach of the armed gendarmes.[3] Although initially fairly calm (the prefect reported that "for the most part" these great demonstrations remained peaceful), [4] the strikes produced some sporadic violence, particularly at the factory gates during shift changes. Workers posted themselves outside and harassed scabs in an effort at intimidation. One worker, Coralie Lesage, aged 22, was in fact arrested for threatening to beat up one of her companions if that woman returned to work.[5]

By the fifth of May these isolated incidents of violence, along with the general atmosphere of militance among the workers, had provoked what the prefect called "Un certain effarement de la bourgeoisie". He added,

"Il sera probablement nécessaire de montrer un peu de force armée pour la rassurer".[6] To that end, nine brigades of gendarmes were stationed at Roubaix, together with mounted troops, called in from the Lille garrison. The calling out of the army produced a series of reports to the minister of war on the state of the strike. On the 7th May, the ministry of war was informed that Roubaix strikers had gathered in groups (100 to 500 strong) to march to the town hall in shifts throughout the day. Each group, upon arrival at the Hôtel de Ville, sent delegates (both men and women) [7] to meet with the mayor. The parade comprised some 6000 people in all and there was no violence. The army official noted with some relief that during the delegates trips inside the building, the crowds waited quietly outside.[8]

But the peace was short-lived. On the 13th May, some 12,000 strikers massed on the Boulevard de Paris. They formed a column, led by children and young people, and prepared to march again on Roubaix's town hall. According to the prefect, they were more menacing than the earlier crowd, and sang "Si on ne veut pas nour renchérir, nous allons tous démolir". The mounted police, anxious to protect the town hall, charged the crowd, breaking it up. No shots were fired and no serious injuries reported. However, that night bands of strikers in all the affected cities were reported to be

breaking factory windows and roaming the streets threateningly. In Armentières, several spinning mills were set alight.[9] From this night on, Roubaix was an armed camp as government troops tried to protect the patronat's homes and factories.

In Tourcoing it was another story. By early May, about 5820 workers were on strike, with a further 250 in the suburb of Linselles, and 647 in Halluin. They presented no threat to the peace, however. Attempting to pin down the difference between workers in Tourcoing and those elsewhere in the textile towns of the Nord, the prefect wrote that Tourcoing workers were "plus élégants et de meilleure tenue" than in Roubaix. Furthermore, "les ouvrières surtout font preuve dans leur toilette d'une certaine coquetterie inconnue à leurs voisines".[10] A sure sign of a better class of worker! Perhaps it was this coquetterie - though more likely it was the traditional paternalism of the city's manufacturers, coupled with the nearby example of Roubaix's growing militance - that provoked the patrons into offering a wage rise in all mills except cotton spinning ones, which were particularly hard-pressed that year. This gesture had the desired effect, and by May 14th the Tourcoing strike was over.

Lille, too, offered none of the worker solidarity which so many contemporaries noted in Roubaix - though it did see some violence. After May 4, some Lille

workers struck in solidarity with their neighbours in Roubaix, but many continued working while others stayed away from factories only because of intimidation at the mill gates. Thus by the second week in May, there were 1954 Lillois strikers, plus 325 in La Madeleine and 150 in Marcq-en-Baroeul. Metallurgists in Lille joined the strikers, as did vast numbers of unemployed casual labourers, vagabonds, smugglers and those women and children of workers' districts not normally employed, or who worked in the domestic outputting system. Thus in Lille the great marches and demonstrations saw some 40,000 people in the streets.[11] They were, obviously, a heterogeneous group - far less organised than their Roubaix counterparts - and perhaps for that reason a more potentially threatening crowd. One police spy warned that in Lille "la class ouvrière est beaucoups moins disciplinée qu'à Roubaix". [12]

The strike continued into late May, in the face of intrasigence by employers in Roubaix and Lille. Small incidents of violence continued, as did demonstrations by great crowds of strikers and their sympathisers, controlled by armed and mounted police and cavalry. On May 24th the prefect got the workers' agreement to allow him to arbitrate the dispute over the 10 hour day and a 10% wage rise. But the patronat refused his offer, convinced that the strikers' misery would drive them back to work before too much time had passed. In

the end the owners won - gradually, beginning in early June, the strikers returned to work, ending the strike with no short-term gains except for those in Tourcoing.

In the long run, however, the 1880 strike had at least four positive consequences. First, workers throughout the Lille arrondissement joined together to make specific economic demands of the patronat. Hostility against Belgian workers declined during the strike, particularly when they proved useful in smuggling contraband from Belgium; smugglers, both French and Belgian, numbered up to 10,000, according to one source.[13] They crossed the border every day, bringing coffee, tobacco and petrol past the helplessly outnumbered customs officials. These commodities, heavily protected and taxed in France, brought enough profit to help some of the thousands of striking families subsist, at least for a while. Furthermore, the Comité Socialiste de Belgique sent money - and did not earmark it for Belgian strikers alone, but rather shared it out among all. These two sources of funds allowed the Belgians working in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing to remain in situ, swelling the numbers of strikers, rather than returning home for the duration as the mayor of Roubaix encouraged them to do.[14] Given the large number of Belgian workers in the local textile factories, this strike unity - however temporary - was an important step in uniting the workforce. After the 1880 experience, both smuggling

and financial aid from Belgian socialists and syndicalists became prominent features of textile strikes in this area.

Secondly, the strike was in many ways a great fête de famille. For some two months in the spring of 1880 workers of all ages and both sexes drew together - for once free of factories with their harsh discipline and demanding rhythms. In the early days of the strike, at least, the atmosphere was festive. On one spring afternoon, a reporter discovered five or six hundred textile workers picnicking at Ballon across the Belgian border, safely out of reach. "Proud of their individuality," he wrote, "they sprawled on the grass in their corduroy velvet trousers, their blue or grey smocks, or even their black Sunday jackets, their caps and pipes." [15]

In the strike's early days, mass street demonstrations had this same air of festivity. Order was maintained by bugle fanfares and numerous "brightly-dressed" children, youths and women carried colourful flags.[16] Such occasions offered a prime chance for textile workers to act out their frequently-expressed longing for community and family life. Days were full of collective activities, all aimed at raising strike funds. A few soup kitchens (so much a feature of post-1900 strikes in the Nord) opened up here and there, though without the resources to survive for long. Numerous meetings in the ubiquitous estaminets, daily marches and demonstrations, smuggling trips to Belgium,

all gathered textile workers together, and all activities, according to several observers, featured constant singing.

Not all was joyful, of course. Collective rebellion also meant collective misery, the sure outcome of a work stoppage in the Nord. Michèle Perrot points to the 1880 strike in this area as exemplary of the miserable conditions of the workers in their struggles against their situation. The distribution of help, which gradually became more organised with the growth of the Parti Ouvrier and the syndicats, was rudimentary in these years. Desperation was widespread. At one point a group of Wattrelos strikers even broke into a local farm and forced the housemaid to give them some bread and butter. They then left, telling her "voilà le moyen de manger quand on n'a plus le sou et qu'on ne travaille pas".[17]

The third long-term result was the timorous emergence of organised syndicats, especially in the one-industry city of Roubaix, and to a lesser extent in Lille and Tourcoing. The strike left no doubt as to the importance of collective activity - thus when workers organisations were legalised in 1884, the early groups emerged publicly and new ones were set up.

These three elements - contact with Belgian socialists, an increasing awareness of community interests, and the beginnings of working-class organisations -

were all to be critically important in the development and shaping of the Parti Ouvrier and its textile unions in the Lille arrondiseement. The fourth element to note about this strike, and the one most crucial to our argument here, is the lack of any clear-cut division of attitude or resistance by sex among the textile labour force of the three cities. On the contrary, as Professor Perrot has noted, "Les femmes, souvent escortées des plus jeunes bambins, ne sont pas moins ardentes, donnant de la voix et du geste...hardies à haranguer les non-grèvistes, capables des plus grandes violences".[18]

Further, all reports of this major strike in 1880 show that women and men played similar roles. The single distinction between their respective activities was the habit of placing women and children at the forefront of some marches. Perrot sees this practice as a symbolic expression of family - "Le cortège de grève est une société organisée, à forte structure familiale, socialement homogène, et relativement clos sur lui-même".[19] It seems more plausible to assume that the rationality of the protesting crowds of the eighteenth century - which placed pregnant women at the heads of marches in order to discourage mounted troops from charging or firing - had not dissipated with time, and that the strikers were following a time-honoured tradition in attempting to deflect the hostility of the forces of order by playing on their well-known male chauvinism.[20]

In short, none of the evidence suggests that women and men behaved in distinctly different ways. Women were arrested for violent behaviour as were men. They marched, they smuggled goods from Belgium, they attended strike meetings, they went as delegates to present their demands to the mayor of Roubaix - and, of course, they stopped work. No distinctly female demands were presented, no women's meetings were held.

Was this strike unique, then? Or did female workers' behaviour throughout our period continue to be similar to that of men, in the public sphere? A briefer look at the textile strikes of later years will attempt to answer that question, at the same time as pointing up developments in the other three important themes apparent in this first general strike.

The mass strike of 1890 shows some significant changes in the organisation of the textile workforce external to the factories, but little change in the internal processes of the strike itself. What began as an externally organised May Day demonstration - the first in French history - suddenly, and to the consternation of the organising Parti Ouvrier, became a mass strike of the textile workers of the three cities, a strike which closely resembled the 1880 uprising in three ways.[21]

Firstly, at the internal or informal level, women workers joined men in mass marches, demonstrations and

attempts to intimidate scabbing co-workers. Secondly, some violence was directed against the patronat, though this time their homes rather than their mills were frequently the target. Thirdly, the forces of authority in the three cities reacted as before, troops joining the local gendarmerie and charging the crowds, breaking the demonstration up in the cities' streets and squares.

At the formal level of national and local organisations, however, women were much less apparent than in 1880. Hierarchies, from militants down to shop-floor organisers, had formed, and women vanished from the forefront of organised meetings and demonstrations. Leadership from the 'outside' (i.e. outside the textile mills) in both the POF and the local syndicats was male.

These changes had positive and negative effects. In so far as organisations had greater financial resources, and could provide a good deal of help for the strikers, they were a positive force. It was the POF which initiated the strike by organising a national demand for the 8 hour day (10 hours in the Nord) presented via mass one-day strikes on May Day. However, some of the 'grass roots' flavour of earlier strikes was lost, and with it went some of the women's participation. As syndicats moved rapidly to organise the striking workers, once it was apparent that few were going to obey the PO and return to the mills on May 2nd, women fell by the wayside. Syndical statutes, as we have seen, limited

women's participation and discouraged their membership. In addition, male militants of the POF tended to concentrate on organising men, whatever the Party's official stand on equal rights for women. [22]

The first French May Day was scheduled for the spring of 1890, following a hard winter in the Nord[23] (the concept of May Day as an international workers' day to demand the 8 hour limit had originated in the U.S.A. and had been adopted by the 1889 congress of the Second International in Paris). May Day 1890 was also the first public test of the POF's strength in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing, and the local party was energetic in promoting the one-day walkout via handbills, public meetings and much talk in the factories and cabarets.[24] Activities in support of the demands were to take two forms: petitions from industrial workers to the Chambre, and the stoppage itself. In addition, local syndicates and socialist groups organised a variety of delegations to their town halls, as well as marches, meetings, etc. [25]

Agitation in the cities did not go unnoticed by the vigilant patronat, nor by the prefecture. Many owners saw to it that once their workers were inside the factory on May 1st, the gates were locked and guarded by armed men. One writer described the mills as "armed fortresses, where all communication with the outside world was cut off". [26]

However, workers were allowed their mid-day break, and thus were able to flee the factories at the noon whistle. They then discovered that the streets were occupied by armed troops from the Lille garrison. Further, to prevent communication between the textile centres, all roads from Lille to Roubaix were closed.[27] As always, Roubaix was the site of greatest worker solidarity, with the greatest number on the streets. In Lille and Tourcoing, fewer textile workers walked out, though numbers were still substantial. When the 54 delegates elected by the Lille workers set out for the prefecture, they were accompanied by some 10,000 people. When they were turned away, one socialist leader noted, "ils ne se découragent pas". Instead, they reasoned that a small group of delegates might have more success, and nine representatives returned to the prefecture that afternoon, this time accompanied by an estimated 20,000 people. [28] They all marched trhough the troop-occupied streets singing and waving May Day banners. This time the delegates were received by the prefect, and managed to present the petition demanding both a 10-hour day and (here the hand of the PO is apparent) wages set by a workers' commission using a cost-of-living index to determine pay rises. The crowd then left the prefecture and returned to the centre of the city where 4,000 more strikers awaited them. [29]

Clearly a substantial portion of the workforce was out in the three cities, though estimates of the numbers vary. On the first day Aline Valette estimated 6,000 strikers in Lille (from 26 textile mills and one chicory processing plant), and 100,000 in Roubaix and Tourcoing (from 22 and 14 mills, respectively).[30] Claude Willard estimates a more conservative 24,007 (sic!) in Roubaix alone on May 2nd.[31]

Such a day of organised worker protest might have passed calmly, as the PO intended it should, had not the patronat and local authorities responded with hostility backed by a massive show of armed force.[32] Of course, it seems logical to assume that one day off work, in warm spring weather, doubtless stimulated a desire for further time off (as Perrot has argued)[33]. In any event, the following day saw the outbreak of what the PO, with dismay, called a "spontaneous strike".[34] By May 3rd 35,000 workers thronged Roubaix's streets,[35] singing, holding meetings, and rejecting en masse the intimidation of a growing police and military presence. A further 40,000 strikers from Tourcoing and neighbouring suburbs soon joined the Roubaisiens.[36]

By May 11th there were some 80,000 workers out in Roubaix and Lille, marching, meeting, singing. So great and so menacing were these crowds of strikers that the mounted police took to charging indiscriminately ("at women and children" protested Le Cri du Travailleur)[37]

in order to disperse them. The constant confrontation between workers and the forces of order culminated at last in the arrest, on the 11th, of two local socialist leaders (both of whom would become mayors in their respective cities only a few years later, when socialists won municipal power - Henri Carette from Roubaix and Gustave Delory in Lille)[38]. They were charged with inciting the violence.[39] Though quickly released, Carette and Delory offered socialist martyrs to the strikers' cause.

Although it was probably not provoked by the PO, whose policy it was to avoid this type of class confrontation, the strike saw a good deal of sporadic violence. Hostility was in the air from the start - the mounted troops faced workers still singing "S'ils ne veulent pas nous renchérir, nous allons tous démolir".[40] In the nights workers gathered outside the palatial homes of the patronat, yelling and menacing the inhabitants. On the night of 6-7 May, some 2,000 textile workers surrounded the home of M. Cordonnier, in Roubaix, and demolished a garden pavilion, threatening the household staff who were gathered watching on the steps.[41] Numerous factory windows were broken every night. Given this high level of tension, it is surprising that the strike dispersed as quickly as it eventually did. By mid-May it had fizzled out and the workers were back in the mills, with no change or improvement in their conditions

at all.

Perhaps because this strike came in two halves, so to speak - the formal, political half of May Day and the informal wildcatting of the 2nd May and thereafter - the reporting of it, by both socialist press and police informers, is muddled and sparse. This is also in part explained by the fact that the Third Republic was no longer particularly startled by mass proletarian militancy after a decade of strikes throughout industrial France, and police reports are thus few. But in those reports that do exist some important constrasts with 1880 emerged.

First, the Belgians were no longer a distinct enough group to be singled out for notice, as they had been in 1880. True, strikers still gathered over the border at Ballon to avoid the troops, but close ties had grown between the communities throughout the eighties, especially between the PO and the Parti Ouvrier Belge,[42] and hostility between their respective constitutencies had died down, notably during the period of industrial upswing after 1886.[43] Also, the Belgian population of these textile cities was now probably more stable than previously, and more recognisable as part of the usual population,[44] following the naturalisation act which encouraged them to become citizens. By now, too, there was some growth of awareness among the working population that their interests were international, rather than

national, as frequent joint POF-POB meetings facilitated the breakdown of hostilities.

The second key element of the earlier, 1880 strike, the high degree of community participation, was present in 1890 but much less apparent in the reporting of the strike itself. The presence of women, children and non-textile workers (smugglers, vagabonds, the unemployed) was apparently taken for granted.[45] Women and children were specifically singled out only once, in a transparent attempt to arouse readers' indignation at the behaviour of the troops.[46] Further, collective activities such as smuggling and soup kitchens were now replaced by organised aid provided by the socialist movement and various local syndicats.

The press reports also suggest the somewhat hasty attempts of the socialists and syndicalists to regain the initiative they had lost after May 1st. These efforts took two forms: first, leaders used the existence of the strike, plus the course it took, as propaganda (e.g. the 'martyrdom' of the women and children, and of Carette and Delory); second, they used the spontaneous meetings and gatherings of all kinds to woo new members.[47]

The lesson which the POF wanted the workers to learn was simple: that only collective organised effort would advance their cause in the unequal class struggle. When, for example, the strikers refused to return to

work after 100 Roubaix patrons had agreed to shorten the work day to 10 hours "if the French government gets an international agreement to that effect", 48 the socialists declared that this was evidence that the "workers knew that any improvements in their condition would come from their collective efforts alone". 49

The large discrepancy between reported numbers of strikers given by the socialists and those offered by the prefect suggest propaganda also, though in this case doubtless by both sides. Thus, figures between 75,000 and 80,000 appeared in the socialist newspaper Le Cri du Travailleur, 50 and Aline Valette estimated 106,000. 51 On the other hand, the government's two reports listed 21,700 in one case and only 1,265 in another. 52

The third factor which had altered dramatically in the decade after 1880 was of course the very presence of political and economic organisations. In this regard it is important to observe that the POF in the Nord had, by 1890, a clear organisational presence (including women's groups which enjoyed some success among female textile workers; see Chapter 6). The gap between the POF's plans and the spontaneous actions of the workers in 1890, however, might be said accurately to reflect the still muddy character of that presence in Lille and Roubaix (in Tourcoing in 1890, the socialists' following was negligibly small).

The influence of the socialists was obvious, though. Witness the number of workers who stayed out on May 1st itself, primarily in response to the PO's call. Furthermore, although admittedly caught by surprise by the workers' refusal to return to work on May 2nd, the Party hastened to move in and quickly organised meetings where demands could be clarified and new members recruited. By May 8, in fact, the Roubaix section of the POF's syndicat was claiming 9,000 dues-paying members (at 1 france per month), and supporting some 14,000 people from its strike fund.[53] In Lille, militants claimed to have "doubled the numerical strength of the PO".[54] Even government figures, though more cautious, attested to a significant increase for the Roubaix-Tourcoing-Wattrelos red syndicat - of about 3,427 new members.[55]

In spite of these changes relative to 1880, much of the strike activity remained as before and independent of formal organisations.[56] Mass marches, violence between crowd and troops, all resemble 1880, although some of the intensity of such incidents was being mitigated by the efforts of the socialists, who preferred petition-signing and voting to window-breaking. This strike is, however, remarkable for the lack of reference to women as a <u>separate</u> group among the strikers. Thus whereas the active presence of <u>ouvrières</u> as a noticeable and important group among the 1880 strikers was repeatedly remarked by official and unofficial observers, little mention was

made of them in 1890. This is all the more significant because one of the reporters was Aline Valette (writing for La Revue Socialiste in 1890), whose socialist-feminist credentials were impeccable, however eccentric her more properly theoretical pronouncements. Valette became, furthermore, the only female member of the POF's national council (in 1893) and the Party's permanent secretary in 1896.[57] It was striking that she made no mention of the participation of women workers, whose concerns she so often articulated at POF rallies and meetings in the Nord in these years. Instead, her report emphasised the Party's line: that May 1st 1890 should be seen and interpreted as the memorable moment when workers all over France joined together for the first time to present their collective demands.[58]

This exclusive emphasis by the POF on the formal, political organisation of the French working class was to grow in the nineties; in the process a concern with female workers as a special category among proletarians vanished. The following period, then, from 1890 to 1906, was characterised by the Guesdists' benign neglect of the 'woman question'. The reasons for this neglect are complex, and in the following chapter we turn to a discussion of these sixteen years, focussing on the national picture as well as the local one, in order to unravel them.

CHAPTER 7

ON STRIKE: 1890-1906

The neglect of ouvrières by reporters of the 1890 general strike continued unabated into the next decade. However, though female textile workers figured little in reports of strike activity in the years 1890-1906, their day to day participation in textile strikes in fact continued without a break. Indeed, the nature of their strike activity in the Lille area suggests that far from disappearing from the workers' movement - as press reaction might suggest - ouvrières were in the process of becoming more integrated into the activities of the Lille area working class.

This chapter looks at the data on strike activity in the textile cities, beginning with a women's strike in 1893 which reflected the growing gap between socialist leaders' perceptions of women's behaviour and that behaviour itself. We shall then look more broadly at local strikes in 1896, 1902, 1906 and 1911 in an attempt to discern prevailing patterns in women's strike participation. Next we shall examine the unique occasion when male textile workers struck against the employment of women and the degree to which it reflected that generalised male hostility so frequently adduced to explain women's putative lack of public activity. Finally the chapter concludes by focussing on the gap between the socialists and female workers, as demonstrated in socialist press reports of the Nord

general strike of the years 1903-4.

In 1892 the passage of the Millerand-Colliard act, which limited women's and children's work hours to 11 per day provoked a number of small defensive strikes by women seeking to maintain workers' income despite the cuts in hours.[1] A significant number concurrently protested the various tactics employed by the patronat to speed up the work process in order to maintain production at pre-1892 levels.[2] In the largest of these defensive strikes, at the Rémy mill at Yon, just outside Lille, the women strikers turned to the local socialist organisation for support.[3]

The facts of the strike are simple. In January 1893 ouvrières at Rémy, paid by the piece, found that shorter hours meant thinning pay packets. They called a meeting and elected a delegation to call on Paul Lafargue (at that time the socialist depute for the arrondissement of Lille)[4] for his advice. Lafargue[5] (with the coming municipal elections in Lille in mind) responded quickly by calling in the socialist textile syndicat and organising a general meeting that evening, where demands were formulated and a strike committee elected. The following day that committee of six ouvrières plus M. Lambert, treasurer of the textile syndicat, confronted the patron who offered them a rise of 5 centimes per day for workers paid by the day, and

1 centime per kilo for piece workers.[6]

When the committee reported back to the workers, the latter rejected the offer and sent their representatives back with one additional demand (obviously suggested by the syndicat): that the patron agree to recognise the union and negotiate solely with its representatives. When the patron met them for a second time he acceeded to this request but refused any further pay rise. That night, the workers voted unanimously to strike.

Although the Parti Ouvrier's official position in 1893 was opposed to strikes as a means to victory in the class struggle,[7] local militants threw their support behind the Rémy women once it was clear that a strike was inevitable, and on the night of January 12th the POF's Comité des femmes de Lille gave a benefit lecture to raise funds for the strike.[8]

From this point on, the socialist press treatment of the strike took a bizarre turn: the strike itself, called to obtain a pay rise for women workers, was overwhelmed by copious and frequent reports of the Comité des femme's campaign to organise these same women into its campaign for free school lunches.[9] By the beginning of February, the strike had vanished from the newspapers, though weekly reports of mass meetings of women demanding scholars cantines continued unabated.

It is not possible to know how this rather peculiar reaction to their call for strike help affected these

women workers' attitudes to the Parti Ouvrier - but it does seem likely that at the least these striking women felt confused when their primary interest - the defense of their meagre wages - disappeared behind a flurry of 'women's activities'. There was clearly a gap between the way working women approached the socialists - as workers with a grievance seeking advice - and the way the socialist party saw them - as women, whose interests as mothers took precedence over their interests as workers.

This 1893 example demonstrates a crucial transition from local socialists' initial assumption that female textile workers were primarily workers and as such their natural constituency, to a view of ouvrières as primarily mothers and wives. To discover the extent to which this gap widened in the two decades before 1914, we shall begin with an analysis of the textile strikes of those years, selecting 1896, 1902, 1906 and 1911 as examples, to see the extent of women's participation in these strikes and to assess their demands.

After 1893, the Office du Travail's yearly compilation of strike statistics began to record the sexes of strikers. Thus it becomes possible to study these exemplary strike years via official statistics, though it should be noted at the outset that all caveats concerning official French statistics in this period apply.[10] This is more than usually true in this instance, with so many axes being ground.[11]

The Statistique des Grèves for the years 1896, 1902

1906 and 1911 offer the following picture of strikes and strikers in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing textile mills: [12]

	1896		*1902*		*1906*		*1911*	
	strikes/strikers		strikes/strikers		strikes/strikers		strikes/strikers	
Women's Strikes:	16	400	10	421	11	491	16	433
Men's Strikes:	52	3937	29	2700	21	1935	61	4910
Mixed Strikes:	17	835W 2413M	8	276W 322M	14	1081W 1874M	8	267W 758M

These figures suggest several conclusions. First, all-female strikes occur throughout the period, and at a surprisingly steady rate, in spite of the fact that women's wages, as we have seen, were steadily dropping - and dropping precipitately in those cases where the patron decided to comply with hour legislation (as at Rémy in 1893). Further, the vast majority of these women's strikes had the same aim: protection of wages (thus in 1896, all 11 strikes demanded higher wages, with three of them adding an ancillary demand for better conditions. In 1902 all the strikes were over wages - not surprising in this year of depression. In 1906, 45% of the female strikes demanded higher wages, with a further 28% demanding changes in conditions as a result of work speed-ups. In 1911, 70% of the strikes demanded higher

wages and better conditions).[13]

It would appear, then, that although women workers in the textile industry were, like their male co-workers, becoming more adept at the use of strikes to improve conditions as well as to raise wages (most strikes in this period failed, though), they were not demonstrating any growth in militance as women strikers, nor did they display any demands that might be seen as peculiarly 'female'.[14]

Male strikes in this period show a trajectory that closely parallels that evinced by the industry as a whole. Thus in 1896, when some of the industry began to recover from the long decline of the previous 16 years, men struck in substantial numbers. In 1902 and 1906, following the return of depressed conditions in the industry, the number of male strikers declined (and did not rise again until the industry began a small recovery just before the war). Most of these strikes too were for higher wages, though more men's strikes involved 'personal' grievances - a category which includes such demands as the firing of a supervisor or co-worker, or the re-hiring of co-workers of both sexes who had been laid off or sacked. In 1896 15% of men's strikes were over personal issues. In 1902 there were none, but in 1906 and 1911 they were 24% of the total.[15]

It was in mixed strikes that women's participation was so significant, for the numbers clearly show that

between 1896 and 1906 women's participation with men was substantial. Only after 1906 did it decline. And in these mixed strikes personal issues were more likely to figure, especially in the early years: 47% in 1896 (all demands to fire overly strict or cruel supervisory personnel, one a nun); 12% in 1902 (though this meant in fact only one such strike - ah, statistics...); 26% in 1906 and none in 1911.[16]

In addition to this greater participation of women in mixed strikes than in all-female ones, strike activity in the Lille area suggested another peculiarity: during a period when strikes against women's employment were a common feature of the industrial scene,[17] only one such strike occurred in the entire Nord department. In 1899, trieurs at Roubaix and Tourcoing struck against the hiring of trieuses.[18] The strike began when certain owners of wool-processing mills decided to add women to their workforce of trieurs. Male reaction was quick. The first trieurs walked out in Tourcoing in November. They were soon joined by their fellows at the giant Motte wool mill in Roubaix.[19] Initially the strikers employed familiar tactics, harassing the newly-hired trieuses as they entered of left the factories. Police reported some men following the women home, threatening them with violence if they refused to quit.[20] As the strike spread to other mills the inevitable strike song was

written (ironically by one Victor Cabart, a highly successful police spy inside the Parti Ouvrier throughout these years)[21] and sold to benefit the strikers.[22] Two of its verses (in Patois) expressed the men's hostility:

> Ah! qu'in va êtes heureux tout d'mêmes
> Avant deux tro innées d'ichis
> Car tous les filles ainsi q'les femmes
> Vont rimplachi tous les ouvris
> Si l'patron préfère la Cocotte
> Pou rimplachi l'ouvritrieur
> J'les plains si un jour in s'révolte
> Y d'mand'ront pardon j'in sus seur.
>
> Tous ces bons patrons catholiques
> Ces semblants d'rin mingeux d'ragout
> Y pourront trier din se l'Clique
> De ces Cocottes, pour tchangi gôut
> Cha s'ra tout benéfice pour eûsses
> Des belles y n'devront pus paihi
> Pour eûsses avoir de bonnes ploteusses
> Y les f'ront apprinte a trihi.

The men were successful. All the newly hired trieuses were sacked (it should be noted here that trieurs were not always male workers, though in these particular wool-preparation mills they had apparently enjoyed a monopoly in the job).

This single incident, then, must stand as the nadir of relations between the sexes in the textile mills, though it brought no echo from outside the wool-preparation factories and no mention from the worker press or local socialist organisation.[23] The usual strike pattern showed solidarity between men and women; large strikes tended to involve the whole community rather than remaining the isolated activity of a particular group of workers.[24]

More typical, in fact, was a strike less than two years after that of the disgruntled trieurs. This one occurred in April 1902 in Tourcoing, at the wool peignage, Binet. There the patron had reduced hours - as the 1902 law required - to 10½ hours for all women and children and men working in mixed-sex workrooms. His workforce protested, and "après divers pourparlers" he offered to maintain the former wages of the men, while only lowering those of the women. "Les ouvriers", crowed the reporter of Voix du Peuple, "ont refusé cette solution et se solidarisant avec les ouvrières ont cessé le travail." [25] This happy state of affairs was short-lived, as one might expect in a year as hard as 1902, and the men ultimately accepted the patron's strike-breaking tactic. But such incidents of strike solidarity were common.

Generally speaking, textile strikes in the Lille area between 1890 and 1906 show women's increased participation, then, especially in mixed strikes. At the same time, however, the POF's behaviour towards women reflected two things: first, as noted, a confusion between ouvrières' primary interests as workers and their private roles as wives and mothers, second a growing neglect of them tout court, following the decline of the various Comités des femmes in the late nineties.

This gap between the local party leadership and half their proclaimed constituency may be further examined

by focussing on strike reporting during the general strike beginning in 1903. Because the period October 1903 - July 1904 saw the biggest textile strikes in French history in the Nord (where their epicentre was in the Armentières region), readers of the press and archival reports of these months might expect to re-encounter those thousands of ouvrières so apparent in the earlier mass strike of 1880. But they would be disappointed. Rather, copious press and police reporting rarely distinguished women strikers from men and instead focussed on the 'State of Siege' in the Nord, where thousands of troops faced thousands of strikers milling in the streets and where mounted cavalry frequently charged such crowds, injuring hundreds.[26] One result was the Chambre des Députés's exhaustive enquiry into the industry, eventually running to several volumes.[27] The working-class press jumped in with both feet: La Revue Socialiste quoted Jean Jaurès's view of the strike;[28] Albert Thomas[29] visited Lille to report on the strike for the newly-founded Humanité;[30] Voix du Peuple in October 1903 launched an extensive series on the strikes.[31]

The official reaction of the Third Republic was speedy but muddled. Calls for government regulation of industrial labour relations vied with the drive to suppress workers' unrest. The conservative, anti-republican patronat complicated matters by flouting whatever

governmental intervention was forthcoming, including efforts to mediate in the strike. It is thus not surprising that the personalities of the workers themselves - male or female - were lost in the rush to exploit the propaganda potential of the strikes. Unusually, reports rarely mentioned community reaction to the strikes, such as the sale of songs, benefit fêtes, spontaneous street demonstrations.[32] The emphasis in all reports was instead on just two things: military repression[33] and organised relief efforts offered by socialist or syndical organisations (or, sometimes, both).[34]

Ouvrières were singled out for mention only twice. Both times it was their identity as women, rather than as workers, which gained attention. Thus one reporter in 1904 described the familiar "soupes communistes", noting with approval that the "cuisinières, who are naturally (emphasis mine) strikers or wives of strikers, do the cooking with spirit...They performed their task with absolute devotion (dévouement) and merit the thanks of all the strikers." [35] And indeed they did merit such gratitude - these cooks made and served some 4812 bowls of soup and 4920 portions of stew every day!

The second appearance of women strikers came in a report of the desperate practice of group begging, where hungry strikers took to the streets pounding wooden bowls with sticks, begging for donations from passers-by. [36] The reporter, perhaps surprised at such a degration of

womanhood, specifically noted the presence in these crowds of 'femmes'.[37]

In some ten months of strike reports, then, women as a separate group are almost entirely absent. Clearly, both the earlier campaigns to organise women workers - into Comités des femmes, groupes des femmes socialistes, or even mixed syndicats, as well as the internal organisations of women's syndicats, had died away or been submerged as the various national organisations consolidated their control (as was the case, for example, with the Fédération nationale du textile and its parent group, the CGT).[38]

Given the socialists' flurry of activity in the 1880s directed at recruiting women workers for the socialist cause, this silence was significant. It did not reflect a general quiescence on the Left in these years: on the contrary, 1903-4 saw a frenzy of activity as socialists strove to compromise over their differences - or force compliance with their views - in order to obey the injunction from the Second International to unify or face expulsion. But all this activity was national in orientation, and on the wider screen of France as a whole female workers in industry showed up only as a minority of a minority. Thus as even the local leaders engaged in pre-unification quarrelling (Roubaix's socialists were as contentious and schismatic as any in Paris) the

importance of organising ouvrières was lost from view.

These strikes in the years from the mid-90s to 1906 suggest that the female textile workers of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing were increasingly joining forces with their male co-workers in strikes, while at the same time maintaining their rate of participation in all-female strikes. The militance of these ouvrières then suggests an intriguing idea: that these years were potentially fertile ground for the mobilisation of the female proletariat by the two organised wings of the French Left, the CGT and the Socialists. In an attempt to develop this theme we shall move now to a description, insofar as this is possible, of the development of working womens' attitudes throughout the period, in France as a whole as well as in the Nord. Did they see themselves as an integral part of the working class? Or were they, as many historians have suggested, too immersed in their roles as women (mothers, wives, daughters, etc.) to take an active concern in issues that might have stimulated the development of 'class' or 'sex' consciousness?

CHAPTER 8

"I Beg You, Remember the Ladies"[1]: 1905-1914

The period 1905-1914 which, as we shall see, saw the re-discovery by the organised French Left of working women, was also marked by women's militance - in all-female strikes, as well as in mixed strikes. In order adequately to portray the significant growth of what might be called women's consciousness in this period, this thesis cannot remain within local or industrial boundaries. The change in working women's self-perceptions occurred on a national level, as did the responses of socialists and syndicalists alike.

The mass textile strikes in the Nord in 1903-4 found an echo in the following year in the silk industry of the south-east. The predominance of female workers in that industry meant that these strikes were organised and led by women (it is the historian's good fortune that one leader, Lucie Baud, has left a detailed account of these silkstrikes 2). Thus the attitudes of one group of French female textile workers can be re-constructed, though any comparison with other ouvrières must be made with an eye to local peculiarities.

The epicenter of the strikes was in Vizille, where silkworkers had been organised earlier with help from the Grenoble socialists and syndicalists. When, in March 1905,

one owner launched a drive to cut his workforce by 60% - in order to institute a new and more efficient American weaving system - and thereby laying off most of his employees, workers were thus organised and able to offer a collective response. Their syndicat met and voted for a strike. The next day, ouvrières worked half a day, leaving partially woven material in every machine. The patron, vacationing in Cannes, initially left the settlement up to the director. He was, of course, hoping that most of the workers would not return to work, thereby de facto conveniently reducing his workforce. The director attempted to put the workers off with the promise that the patron would discuss the lay-offs if they would return to work until he came back from the Riviera. But, in Lucie Baud's words, "Nous ne crumes pas un seul mot!" [3] Some days later the patron returned and offered a new pay scale designed to discourage three-fifths of his employees from returning; only the desperate, he believed, would accept the new, lower wages, at which point he could raise them again to former levels, his purpose accomplished. The workers refused. As the strike dragged on, the local magistrate agreed to arbitrate at the behest of the syndicat, but the patron failed to respond. He was back in Cannes.[4]

After a month of strike, the ouvrières were destitute, their meagre resources exhausted. So they sent out an appeal to outside comrades - by 1905 a common

recourse among organised workers - and 'all their friends' from Grenoble and Lyon responded. Soup kitchens were established with money from outside. So successful were they that the workers began selling the excess. On market days, Baud noted, numerous peasants came to buy lunch.[5]

The soup kitchens provided meat, bread and vegetables to strikers and their children at noon each day, and potato and vegetable soup each evening. The collective meals continued for 104 days, and as time passed the ouvrières found growing support among the local citizenry. Merchants gradually began offering discounts on food and other necessities, as well as extending credit to the strikers. Women workers in a neighbouring factory voted a solidarity strike, but then reconsidered and decided instead to continue working and to donate 50 centimes weekly (each) to the strikers. This they did for six weeks.[6] Their employer, however, was threatened by these acts of solidarity and promised to fire any women discovered donating to the strike fund. Collections in the workrooms themselves were forbidden. The result of the threat was a mass protest in the streets of Vizille. Soldiers and gendarmes were called to repress it and many boys and girls were arrested, the girls receiving 8 days in prison, the boys 10 to 12.[7]

After three months the patron returned from Cannes and resumed meetings with the ouvrières. He hoped that

economic misery would soon drive some of the women back to work, no doubt, but they continued to hold firm and he agree to the prefect's offer to appoint an arbitrator. When the latter (himself a mill owner) took the women's side, the patron ignored the judgement. Finally he hit on a successful tactic, one which ironically played upon the same women's solidarity which had underpinned the strike itself. He despatched the wives of his chauffeur and his book-keeper to the homes of various domestic out-working women in the city to recruit them for the mill. Nineteen were, in Baud's words, "seduced", enough to break the strike; once work had resumed at the mill many strikers, fearful of permanent unemployment, gave in and returned. Those who were identified as strike leaders, along with those who resisted the return to work, were black-listed by the Vizille patronat. Lucie Baud herself, single and without family, left for Voiron in search of work.[8]

This women's strike involved familiar patterns - of mutual aid, of help from neighbouring regions, of soup kitchens and militance. It should also be noted that help from Grenoble and Lyon came both from male and female workers: excepting the solidarity of the other women workers there was no particular 'feminist' caste to the strike.

The year 1905 saw at least four other movements of women workers organising on their own behalf: two in the Lyon area (of giletières and blanchisseuses[9]) one in the Cher (couturières) and one in Paris (corsage makers). The ouvrières of the Lyon region followed a local tradition by forming production cooperatives. The giletières' cooperative provoked hostility from the local patronat which tried breaking it in order to keep the workers as sweated labour directly controlled by middlemen. The women struck, supported by the usual 'soupes communistes', mass demonstrations and benefits held by other syndicats. In addition, these giletières were aided by two other predominatly female unions: the Fédération des Tabacs, which sent 100 francs, and a local Syndicat de la Confection which sent 2 francs per member.[10]

The cooperative of blanchisseus in Villefranche was founded to retrieve workers' control over their own labour.[11] It printed its own journal, L'Emancipatrice, and a contemporary noted approvingly that in the cooperative's workrooms these women sang while they worked - something specifically forbidden elsewhere.[12]

In the Cher department a call to couture workers to organise took a clearly feminist line. The secretary of the Bourges syndicat wrote "Il y a assez longtemps que vous êtes chair à travail et à plaisir; dites-leur que vous aussi vous voulez respirer plus librement, vivre

une vie plus humaine et meilleure".[13]

Finally, 1905 saw at least one group of domestic outworkers gathered together to try to ameliorate their lot when a number of 'ouvrières confectionneuses' in Paris wrote to their local workers' syndicat for help in organising.[14] Whether they were successful or not is unrecorded in the single reference to their initiative. However, the problems of organising the sweated trades - where workers toiled in isolation for tiny wages - probably defeated them, as it had defeated others in their situation.[15]

The following year, however, saw at least one successful organisation of such outworkers. In November, in Cerbère, some 300 transbordeuses d'oranges formed a syndicat rouge and succeeded in winning a wage rise.[16] Their employers, the transiteurs, attempted to destroy the union, however, by hiring 60 new women organised into a yellow union under patronal control. The transbordeuses struck, leaving crates of oranges rotting on the dock. They demanded that transporting jobs be handed out by seniority, regardless of syndical membership. Although Clemenceau ordered the army to Cerbère to end the strike, the women held firm, even recruited some of the jaunes, and went on to win their case.

Other women's strikes were provoked by the CGT's call for a general strike in 1906.[17] One of these strikes,

in Voiron (Isère), was part of a broader strike movement in the Lyon-Grenoble region.[18] It provided a telling example of workers' non sex-specific solidarity and of a functioning and articulate 'socialist-feminism' among the Isère ouvrières.

The strike began in March 1906 in thirteen silk weaving mills in Voiron.[19] The demand was for a unified wage throughout the town's mills. Initially the left-leaning municipal authority provided free meat and bread to the strikers, used in the soup kitchens to feed strikers and their families. When the local patronat succeeded in halting this food supply, the strikers appealed to workers' organisations throughout France. The response was immediate and generous - more than 3000 francs poured in.

The Voiron ouvrières then expanded their soup kitchens, offering to feed the Italian silk workers in the nearby town of Patinière if they joined the strike. The encounter was significant. At the first meal provided by the syndicat's soup kitchen the French women were shocked to discover the extent of the Italians' hunger. Lucie Baud, again a strike leader, wrote, "Ces pauvres femmes déclarent n'avoir jamais mangé à leur faim depuis plusieurs anneés qu'elles travaillaient à l'usine Permezel, et surtout n'avoir jamais mangé de viande".[20] One of the Italian women died in the course of the strike, despite the care that came her way because of it. The

French women discovered that the diet before the strike had been bread dipped in vinegar.

At first the French ouvrières found it difficult to help the Italians, few of whom spoke French. Then help came from the Union du tissage mécanique of Lyon, which sent M. Auda, an Italian speaker. He discovered that the patronat had recruited the Italian women - with the help of the local clergy - in Piedmont. They had been promised 3 francs a day, but once in the Isère mills they found their monthly pay docked for the 'cost of the trip', leaving them with scarcely enough for food and never enough for the return journey. They lived in dormitories which M. Auda described as 'insalubrious', the bedding changed once or twice per year; for this accommodation they also paid out of their meagre wages.

The strike changed everything for the Italians. M. Auda brought the owners before the local Conseil des Prud'hommes, where they were charged to make good the promises offered in Italy. Consequently, conditions in the dormitories improved and wages were no longer debited for the trip from Italy; some workers began to save for their return. Meanwhile the Voiron ouvrières were equally successful and a unified wage-scale was instituted.

The strike was significant in three respects. First it provided ample evidence of women's solidarity, even

crossing ethnic boundaries. These Isère women actually called themselves 'feminists',[21] and their actions confirm the appelation. Second, there was no hostility be sex. Quite the reverse. Workers' organisations, predominantly male, as we have seen, sent a very substantial sum of money when the Isère women requested aid - even the mixed syndicats of nearby Lyon also responded, as they had done in 1905, unequivocally. Finally, the strike illustrates the growing influence of socialist movements in the area; the municipality's initial support, as well as the ouvrières' attitude towards the Italians, so often the butt of hostility in this area,[22] suggest some success of left-wing organisation in the south-east of France.

There were several all-female strikes in the following year, 1907,[23] but there were also others which offer support for the view that male-female hostility was less widespread than might be assumed. Six hundred female and four hundred male boot and shoe workers in the east of France (at Lanenveville-les-Raon) struck together for higher wages and better conditions.[24] A similar joint effort was launched at the Motte spinning mill in Roubaix, where strikers demanded the re-employment of a fired ouvrière.[25] A much larger strike involving 3,000 tisseuses and tisseurs broke out in Roanne for the same reason. When this strike failed, workers set up a fund for the fired ouvrière.[26]

In 1908 there were fewer womens' strikes recorded; the three womens' strikes reported by the Nord prefect in November and December were mere flurries before the storm of the 1909 general strike in that area.[27] The ouvrières of the silk industry in the Isère went on strike again, however, in May of 1908, demonstrating the same solidarity between male and female workers as before. In fact their plea for help - written by a male militant - made the point that as most of the strikers were women, they deserved more help; "pour elles," he wrote, "le maximum de sacrifices possibles."[28]

For our purposes, the most important strike of the following year, 1909, was the general textile strike of the Lille area, which broke out in October and lasted 72 days, after which the strikers conceded defeat. In many respects it duplicated earlier general strikes in these cities, in 1880, 1890 and 1904. In fact, the workers' demand was for the same unified wage system they had failed to gain five years before (though the Armentières workers had won it). The form of the strike was familiar: street demonstrations, family fêtes, benefits, marches and soup kitchens all evoked an earlier period. A festive air also characterised the early days of the strike, despite the onset of a Flemish winter.[29] A new element, however, was the efficient organised distribution of help. By 1909, the local SFIO and its textile

syndicats were thoroughly organised and well-administered. Thus the grim suffering of earlier strikes was alleviated.

Women's participation in this strike had none of the feminist overtones of the Isère textile strikes of these years; instead, ouvrières struggled as part of a community of textile workers of both sexes and all ages. Of course, this reflected the anomalous numerical distribution of males and females in the Nord textile industry; where females were a large majority in Isère silkworking they were slightly less than half the total workforce in the mills of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing. This characteristic probably explains a general lack of any special mention of women workers in the two most detailed strike reports: that of Léon de Seilhac, who wrote a book about what he saw during the strike, and that of the socialist union's national president, Victor Renard, which appeared in l'Humanité.[30]

Fortunately for the historian of female textile workers, two local newspapers, the Progrès du Nord and the Petite République, gave ouvrières some attention, though in both cases it was either coincidental or a result of male reporters' rather prejudiced view of them. Thus the two papers' photographs of various demonstrations and marches showed more female strikers than male,[31] though this is certainly not reflected in the written reports. When one reporter did note female participation, he

reported it thus: of young ouvrières at the head of a march, he wrote

> Les jeunes filles, notamment coiffées du bonnet blanc, et portant sur les épaules un fichu de même couleur, sont l'objet d'une vive curiosité. Elles ont beaucoup de mérite, ces jeunes ouvrières, car elles ont du se lever de bonne heure pour être exactes au rendez-vous. Elles ont d'autre part à leur arrivée Place de la République effectué plus de seize kilometres. 32

This patronising tone (why applaud the young women's early arrival at a march when they typically began the factory day before dawn?) was partially echoed by a Petite République reporter, though he emphasised the young ouvrières' pathetic appearance rather than their colourful dress and punctuality:

> "rattacheuses", he saw, "aux figures pales et aux regards douloureux, jeunes filles anémiées par l'harassant labeur de l'usine..." 33

Outside of leading one procession, female textile workers in general took no special 'women's role' in the strike, but instead were integrated into the community of workers. In fact, during a strike meeting, when one feminist militant, Citoyenne Petit (who came from outside), attempted to suggest feminist demands - for birth control, women's health and 'an end to corsets' 34 - she was greeted by laughter from the ouvrières. Seilhac claimed, furthermore, that the women held their infants aloft and cried, "we know what we made".[35] This reported reaction, if accurate, suggests that the early

socialist feminists in the three cities had, by 1909, left little mark on the workers' movement at the local level.[36]

In the following year women piece workers in Paris again tried to organise. Confestionneuses - "les pauvres travailleuses de l'aiguille, tant exploitées" in one contemporary's words[37] - struck in a vain though prolonged attempt to gain higher wages. Another group of Parisian female workers, the couturières at Maison Esder, struck with more success. Their demands included higher wages and the re-hiring of three women who were fired when their brother was insolent to a supervisor.[38] One CGT reporter summed it up: "A une satisfaction morale, elles joignirent une satisfaction matérielle".[39] Their success at organising themselves for what became a protracted strike brought an early 'Bravo!' from the CGT.[40]

Both strikes lasted into the following year. The first ended in failure, the second in success.[41] The latter, in fact, provoked regular coverage in the CGT press.[42] Each day, the papers reported, crowds gathered outside Esder's to protect the striking women from agents hired to keep them in line. Apparently these agents sometimes resorted to violence when the women got out of hand,[43] and one CGT militant, Georges Yvetot, claimed that the crowd's daily appearance was evidence of class solidarity transcending male-female hostility.

These two women's strikes were small fry, however,

compared to the great food riots of the Nord in 1911; not surprisingly, the latter overshadowed all other working women's activities in the public mind. The riots combined women who worked for wages (textile workers) and ménagères (in this case miners' wives). Together these women took to the streets of most towns and cities in the Nord in September, protesting the intolerable cost of food. In taking to the streets to protest high bread prices women were of course acting in a time-honoured manner, as French women from at least the seventeenth century (and probably earlier) had taken such collective action on such an issue.[44]

The first riots broke out in August; in a few weeks they had spread to most towns and cities of the region. "Les femmes", wrote Yvetot, "avec leurs sens économique des choses, ont trouvé qu'il était temps d'en finir avec cette hausse insensée des denrées de première nécessité."[45] The women were revolting against rises in the price of milk, butter and eggs especially, employing sabotage to upset merchants' sales.[46]

While the bourgeois press blamed 'outside agitators' for the riots, the left lamented its failure to predict them.[47] Yvetot, again, wrote "Les femmes, sans nous, ont senti le besoin de réagir contre l'augmentation scandaleuse..." Many observers were shocked at the women's behaviour, unable to understand that "la femme, l'éternelle sacrifiée, semble enfir vouloir prendre sa

place au banquet de la vie."[48] Yvetot concluded that such observers were about to be surprised "because a revolutionary movement into which women throw themselves is always special".[49]

Amidst all the surprise exhibited in the press (one writer declared that the "brave women were acting like men")[50] some key elements of the riots were identified. One observer noted that in every locality women began by electing a president. And among the leaders, this writer noted in amazement, "Il y a même des femmes cyclistes!" (by which he probably meant women of the most liberated sort).[51] In at least one town the women hit on an ancient tactic: that of placing at the head of a procession those least likely to be attacked by opposing cavalry. In the nineteenth century these were bourgeoises. Thus at 5 a.m. one morning the women of Bruay went around to various bourgeois homes to call out women (readily identified by their hats and clothing) to march in front of working-class women. Together, singing the Internationale, the columns of Bruay women made it all the way to the gates of Valenciennes without the cavalry charging.[52]

The cavalry's presence was testimony to the size of the crowds. In one Fourmies march, 4,000 people crowded the streets, again singing the Internationale.[53] Many participants were arrested.[54] Most press reports identified rioters as housewives ('ménagères'), but the constitution of the striking women's groups was less

clear-cut than that. Those liberated 'femmes cyclistes', for example, suggest a slightly different participation, and the designation of leaders by red scarves, with the singing of the Internationale, gave a distinctly political content to the riots. Of even greater significance, some women behaved markedly like workers, forming at the very outset a syndicat which persisted to the end of the riots.[55]

In the absence of eye witness accounts of these food protests,[56] the content of the various riot meetings is lost. Nevertheless, it seems fair to say that while the press might have been amazed and shocked by their 'unwomanly' behaviour, these women were acting in a manner both traditional and very new, by taking to the streets to protest prices in this way. The cause was familiar, as were some of the forms. But the forming of syndicats and the electing of presidents at formal meetings were certainly changes from former times.

The following year, 1912, offered two contrasting local examples of the relations between male and female workers, one in Roubaix, the other just across the border in a town near Brussels. In the first case, 190 Roubaix trieurs were again on strike against the employment of trieuses in one wool preparation mill. However, whereas the local textile syndicats had not supported the 1899 strikes against the employment of women, this time they did,

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united against the idea that women had a right to equal job opportunities in at least one occupation monopolised - albeit in only a few factories - by men.[57]

On the other hand, Belgian workers produced an act of male-female solidarity which was grandly reported in the Belgian and French syndicalist press. During a very long strike and lock out of male _carrossiers_, rumour spread that the workers' wives were wanting their husbands to yield. The syndicat decided to quash the rumour with a tactic familiar to striking miners: they held a meeting to poll the strikers' wives. When the secret vote was counted, it showed that all 273 women had voted to 'press on to victory'. The newspaper report added "Onze courageuses citoyennes qui n'avaient pu venir, occupées qu'elles sont à l'atelier, avaient envoyé des lettres dans le même sens!"[58]

We know almost nothing about how female workers responded to such incidents. Did the women of Roubaix - especially those unemployed, or who belonged to textile syndicats - feel betrayed by the _trieurs_' strike? Or did they, too, see the patron's tactic as one designed merely to lower wages by exploiting women? Living as they most probably did in textile families, in textile _courées_, did they share the Belgian women's commitment to the workers' struggle, regardless of sex?

Fortunately for historians of working women, the next

year, 1913, saw the beginnings of extended investigative reporting by the CGT press which attempted to unveil these women. The series or articles began in the autumn of 1913 and continued until the outbreak of war in the following year. Through the eyes of reporters writing for the CGT weekly La Bataille Syndicaliste, we begin to gain a clearer sense of the behaviour and attitudes of France's female workforce. The portrait emerged from the work of several reporters, but none was so important as that of Marcelle Capy. Not only did Capy interview women and visit factories and workshops; she also went undercover by taking a job in order to experience the lives of her subjects.[59]

These investigative reports in Bataille Syndicaliste were initially provoked by a mass strike of women sugar refinery workers in May of 1913. At Mm Lebaudy, in Paris, women 'surprised' the management by walking out when their wages were lowered.[60] The reporter, Marcel Laurent, was immediately struck by the hypocrisy of prevalent male attitudes about women working when he visited the refinery and saw the actual conditions in which these women worked. He remarked that those who worried about the decline of the French population were ignoring its true causes. The health of the race depended on the health of women and these women, he noted, "résident uniquement dans les travaux malsains, inhumains

et abrutissants, qui engendrent la misère et l'alcoolisme".[61] At Lebaudy, the women worked 10 hour days, "A une tâche où des hommes peineraient terriblement...Des femmes sont employées, dans une atmosphère suffocante, viciée par une intense poussière de sucre et par 60 degrés de chaleur..." Not surprisingly, the women shed most of their clothing upon entering the workroom, and there, "nerfs tendus, les traits contractes, ces femmes vont comme des automates ou font effort comme des bêtes donnant toute leur energie pour s'acquitter d'une tâche qui les accable, les ext ".[62]

This misery, however, did not prevent a defensive strike to protect their wages.[63] The strikers were of all ages, from girls of 14 or 15 ("qui avaient déjà des visages graves de femmes") to older women, wearied from "long years in the shadow of the factory".[64] "Mais toutes, unies en une même révolte, semblaient les soeurs d'une même famille et un même cri sortait des lèvres fraîches."[65]

The strike had all the usual hallmarks - soup kitchens, meetings, a newly-organised syndicat and support from other syndicats (men in Lebaudy stores in Paris walked out in sympathy), and from the quartier. Sympathetic neighbours prevented scabs from taking the strikers' jobs,[66] and in an interesting side note, one reporter remarked that the only women still coming to work at the refinery were those under pressure from "maris

brutals".[67]

As the days passed, the numbers at strike meetings grew - from 400 at one early meeting to 500 a few nights later. The secretary of the new syndicat des raffineuses addressed the syndicat and promised "S'il ne restait qu'une seule gréviste, ce serait moi!"[68] On the 22nd May, the women won. Although the CGT declared that the victory marked "the awakening of women after centuries of sleep",[69] the details suggest this was hardly a strike of the previously comatose, as is suggested by their effective use of the tactics and procedures common in industrial action at this period. Only the reporting of the strike - which showed male surprise both at the nature of 'women's work' and at their active rebellion - suggests otherwise. We shall return to this point later.[70]

Marcelle Capy began her reports with the story of women clerks at the Printemps store in Paris, who were subjected to the most severe management control.[71] Guarded during every waking hour, both by the store's inspectors and by spies among them, it was hardly surprising that they did not strike. Nevertheless, they bought and read Bataille Syndicaliste when it was sold outside the store. On the day Capy watched this process, twelve inspectors noted every woman who bought the paper. "As soon as a woman approached the paper seller,

the eyes of the surveillants fastened on her, severe and full of menace."[72] Finally one woman approached the stall and whispered, "Return at noon and fold the papers so they can't see the title." When Capy and the seller did return at the noon break, however, the found the number of inspectors had doubled. Nonetheless, the women continued to buy. [73]

Next, Capy moved inside a factory, 'La Vigneronne', outside Paris. Here beans were bottled by two kinds of ouvrière: married women who were not entirely dependent on their wages, and single women, some of whom supported children. The former, Capy wrote, were characterised by indifference, the latter by fear.[74] Conditions in the factory were, in Capy's words, 'hideous'. Like the shopgirls of Printemps, ouvrières were constantly spied upon and encouraged to persecute the weakest among them. One bean bottler complained to Capy that the patron had not allowed her to go home when a message came saying her child had died. And the other workers refused to support her request because they hoped to curry favour with the employer.[75]

Capy's next sortie was into the world of the paper-cornet makers in Paris. She told her readers that next time they bought these pretty candy-filled cornets they should spare a thought for the women who sat all day in a factory making them. 1000 cornets earned 1. fr25c

for piece workers; others were paid 2 fr. to 2 fr. 25c per 10-hour day. By the end of only a few minutes of work, in the words of one woman, "Les doigts s'engourdissent rapidement, et celle qui a quarante sous par jour peut se dire bonne ouvrière."[76] In this factory too the women were constantly watched by supervisors endlessly calling "faster, faster".

The cornet makers were not entirely passive, however. Just before Capy's investigation in early September, some cornet fillers had struck for better pay and elected a delegate to present their demand to their boss. He offered a small increase in rates, but made it a condition that the fillers also fold the cornets, and that erstwhile folders also fill. As this slowed work down, ouvrières' wages were effectively cut. When the owner's intentions became clear some of the women protested that these were 'famine wages'. They were shown the door. A few left, but most submitted.[77] Meanwhile, Capy noted that the only fear greater than the fear of unemployment was that of illness, for when they were ill they could not even go onto the streets to find subsistence.[78]

The year 1913 saw a number of other women's strikes outside Paris reported in the syndicalist press. At Le Havre, in October, 250 women stopped work in a cooking-oil refinery to demand 1 fr. 25c more per day on their 2.375 fr. per day for 10½ hours. The population supported them with contributions which the women distributed only

to those of their number not supported by husbands or brothers.[79] In Tourcoing, one of the Motte factories was struck from September through October, with some 1,000 workers out. The well-organised Tourcoing patronat responded with a variety of tactics. First, since many of the strikers were members of the Syndicat textile de Mouscron, a Belgian socialist union, the patronat had the union leader kept out of France. At the same time the owners recruited Belgian clergy - 'les corbeaux' in workers' slang - who went among the workers denigrating the Republic, lay schools and, most of all, strikes. Another ruse was aimed at the female workers, when certain patrons reduced the number of ouvrières per continuous weaving machine from two to one, throwing some fifteen workers out and saving 16-18 francs per day. Other ouvrières, who worked four to a machine, had their wages lowered by 25 centimes. Thus by aiming blows only at women, the patronat hoped to divide the workforce. The tactic failed and the strike continued.[80]

Then one great even virtually halted reports of smaller women's strikes throughout France. This was the Affaire Couriau (which has been extensively treated elsewhere[81] and which will thus receive only a brief discussion here). At the end of 1913, Louis and Emma Couriau arrived at Lyon, seeking jobs as typographers. Louis Couriau was refused entrance into the local syndicat - thus effectively excluding him from work - because he allowed

his wife to take a job as a typographer! Needless to say, the decision of the local syndicat was controversial, in fact contravening the decision taken by the recent Bordeaux Congress of the national federation of typographers, where it was decided to allow women's participation.

Emma Couriau first tried to get help from the typographers of Lyon, but when that failed she turned to the Fédération féministe du Sud-Est, which was supported by silkworkers and primary school teachers in the area, as well as by middle-class feminists.[82] This group succeeded in provoking a national discussion of the issue of women working-in the journals of the CGT as well as those of the socialists.[83]

This in turn stimulated both groups to examine the reasons for the evident lack of significant female membership in left-wing organisations of all kinds. A corollary benefit of the publicity was the public appearance - in the columns of newspapers of CGT and SFIO alike - of many female militants from all over France, especially those women of the Isère whose socialist-feminism had long been apparent.

Although most press coverage involved debates and re-examination provoked by the Couriau affair, ordinary workers continued to strike - less concerned as they necessarily were with national debates when their own livelihoods were so meagre and constantly threatened.

Women glove makers joined their male co-workers on strike for higher pay at Ganterie de Millau.[84] One hundred boutonnières walked out over a wage drop at Loncle et Frères in Paris.[85] In another month, umbrella makers at Aurillac struck for higher pay and a standardised wage. During their strike, some 800 men and women marched on the factories, singing and carrying syndical banners.[86] Throughout this Aurillac strike, male-female solidarity was again apparent; men marched in the women's demonstrations, and male syndical militants sent out pleas for financial help.[87] In one article Pierre Dumas, secretary of the local Fédération de l'Habillement, observed that these umbrella workers were not working for 'extra' wages for families; many of these women not only lived on their small wages, but supported three or four children besides.[88] Dumas interviewed a number of the workers, who told him that during the six-month season they worked 14-17 hours per day, every day.[89] Their wages had not risen in 30 years, though occasionally, as was the case this time, they had fallen. When the first women had walked out of the factory to protest a 40% drop in pay, all the others, including the women who worked at finishing the umbrellas, joined immediately. After one month only two out of the 400 strikers had tried to return to work. When they did, the 'entire quartier' rose up to prevent them. Finally, on 23rd February 1914, "une grande et belle victoire"

was announced and pay rose by 30-50%.[90] The strike's legacy, according to the CGT, was a new women's syndicat and a fresh spirit throughout the department.[91]

In March of 1914, Marcelle Capy began to paint an extraordinarily detailed picture of the women textile workers of the Nord. It was a moving group portrait, the details of which were accurate and finely drawn. However, Capy's sympathy (and her ignorance) led her to draw a portrait without edges: there was no sign of the organised resistance, of socialist meetings, of strikes or demonstrations. Only rarely did the Flemish spirit emerge. Overwhelmed by the horror and poverty of the lot of these ouvrières in the mill and at home, Capy could not see with the eyes of someone familiar with life in the textile courées, such as Maxence van der Meersch.[92] Because she could not imagine such women resisting their conditions, and also because she was anxious to explain women's low membership in left-wing movements, Capy did not seek beyond the obvious, bleak facts of daily life in the textile cities of the Nord.

Nevertheless, occasinally some fragments of personality emerged from her interviews. For example, an attitude of stolid practicality coloured the women's attitudes to their jobs. When Capy asked why they did these onerous jobs, the replied, "Who else is going to feed the kids?"[93] The problem was that Capy's shock at the textile workers' lives distorted her understanding of the

most straightforward of responses. Thus, like many other left-wing militants of her day, she accepted the belief that women workers were more passive than men. Unlike male writers, however, Capy held feminist sympathies and these led her to attempt an explanation for this passivity. Thus she wrote:

> Chez les femmes - et elles sont nombreuses; rien qu'à Lille, il y a plus de 50,000 ouvrières du textile - la passivité est encore plus grande. Elles ne se croient dignes que du labeur forcé qu'on veut bien leur donner. Elles ne voient rien d'autre. Leurs pauvres imaginations ne coinçoivent pas de situations moins mauvaises que la leur. Filles d'esclaves, elles le croient naturel de continuer la tradition. Toutes petites, elles ont pris l'habitude du joug. Elles son incultées et il est triste de constater que bien des fileuses, jeunes, savent à peine signer. Elles ne lisent pas, elles ne fréquentent que l'église obligatoire et l'estaminet; l'un et l'ature lui font prendre ses maux en patience.[94]

She added no mention of the demonstrations, strikes or riots that signalled textile workers rebellion throughout our period. Nor was she apparently aware of the strong and growing presence of the SFIO and the unions.

Capy continued her series, moving next to the streetlamp makers at the Osram factory near Paris.[95] But then the war intervened and the French Left, torn asunder once again by the controversial vote for war credits and the subsequent divisions over the Russian Revolution, lost whatever headstart it had on the subject of organising women workers (or even acknowledging their existence), and in the twenties, after the division into

two parties at Tours, the whole matter was 're-disovered' anew.[96]

The foregoing suggests a number of important conclusions concerning women's activities in the years 1905-1914 and the constituents of working women's 'consciousness'. First, both the overview in this chapter and the recent work of many historians puts forever to rest the bland assumption that working women were not active in strikes and union activities. Ancillary notions should also be consigned to the historiographical waste-nasket, including inter alia the belief that women retained 'traditional' values and modes of behaviour long after men (and even children) had relinquished them, or the odd idea that "women saw wage work as a temporary, though no doubt desirable stage in their lives".[97]

It is also clear that, while marriage and children limited women's participation to some extent, they neither ended nor altered its nature. No special or separate 'married women's attitude' appears in the evidence regarding women on strike. The sole distinction between male and female strikes that emerged was that concerning the number of defensive rather than offensive strikes (see Chapter 7). Women were, apparently, more likely to strike to maintain wages that to attempt to raise them or obtain better conditions. Even so, those male strikes

that were not defensive were not so many as to make this a distinction of importance.

To put it clearly and simply, there was no particular 'women's' content to strikes or strike activity. When women workers struck, as at Vizille or Voiron, male syndicalists and socialists lent their support. In the France of industrial workers, during the Belle Epoque it was easier to make a case for the community-based nature of strikes, for the solidarity of industrial workers and their families, than it was to argue for a sexual division of economic attitudes. Furthermore, the stereotypical view of women as 'enemies' of strikes arose from prejudice rather than out of the facts; unfortunately, this prejudiced view has itself been accepted uncritically by some historians of working women. Rather than seek to investigate the status of the charge, many writers have fallen into the trap of seeking explanations for it. Others, especially recently, have begun increasingly to reject the stereotype in favour of research and have concluded, in the words of Maïté Albistur and Daniel Armogathe that "dans les grèves dures, les femmes sont encore là, malgré la légende qui les désigne comme des poltronnes".[98]

The picture left by striking ouvrières, then, is different only in detail from that left by male strikers. However, neither the CGT nor the SFIO was willing or able to see the matter in this light.[99] Instead, an

analysis of the reactions to women's activities in the press of both organisations shows that each passed the years between 1905 and 1914 ignoring women's expressed attitudes in favour of their own views of how women ought to behave and think. And as each wing of the French Left developed its ideas, both produced theories to explain their views. In the case of French syndicalism in this period, the prevailing view was of women as 'instinctively' prone to 'direct action' - a 'natural revolutionary force' - and thus by inclination recalcitrant to organisation. In the case of the socialists, their views of working women coalesced into a doctrine which, as we shall see, proposed to explain women's liberation as an incidental corollary to the more 'crucial' liberation of the male proletariat. This complicated theoretical high wire act produced in its turn a new theory aimed at explaining women's place in a marxist theory of liberation - a theory profoundly different from that promulgated by the Guesdists in the eighteen eighties.

This later version of 'socialist feminism' held on - and remains, in effect, the ground upon which more recent theorists have in turn erected doctrines of their own. Because the SFIO's creation of this tenacious doctrine developed in a political context characterised by a growing threat from organised syndicalism, both sets of attitudes about working women must be examined. As we do so, it is important to keep in mind the picture sketched in this

chapter of women's actual behaviour and attitudes, so that the gap between socialist theory and working women's practice remains clear.

CHAPTER 9

OUVRIÈRES AND THE CGT

'For men differ as Heaven and Earth
But women, worst and best, as Heaven and Hell.'

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

For centuries, the image of woman has lived in the collective mind of western society as a duality. Tennyson saw it as half heaven and half hell, Proudhon as 'whore or housewife'. Among radicals in post-Revolutionary France, this dualism was often expressed as the division between the real - e.g., the ménagère - and the symbolic - e.g., Marianne, a revolutionary superwoman, whose most famous portrait was by Delacroix.[1]

In the world of industrial France, however, this simple mental division between mothers and heroines no longer served. In this context, it was not surprising to find evidence of a clash between long-held beliefs about 'woman's nature' and the evidence provided by rebellious ouvrières.[2] One hapless policy spy, for example, found himself caught in this mental dilemma when he was asked to characterise the female textile workforce of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing, in 1909. Obviously nonplussed, he described ouvrières in these words:

> Elles n'ont jamais songé à fomenter et encore moins à participer à un mouvement greviste. Elles acceptent les directions de leur organisation et n'ont jamais manifesté par un acte quelconque leurs sentiments à l'egard du patronat.

Of others, he wrote:

> Dans les grèves, elles se signalent généralement par une ardeur agressive à l'égard du patronat et encouragent par leur attitude leurs maris à la résistance. Dans les mouvements importants, les conflits graves, on les a vues parfois descendre sur la voie publique et se joindre aux manifestants... Mais en général elles sont animées de l'esprit de lutte contre le capital et se montrent très ardentes dans leur revendications. [3]

Which was it to be? As this police spy did not settle on one image, neither did most syndicalist militants develop any consistent response to women workers. Residual beliefs about 'women's nature' continued to inform efforts at understanding throughout the Belle Epoque. The CGT leadership made a valiant attempt to come to terms with women workers, however. Both the Voix du Peuple, the CGT's official weekly journal, and the syndicalist Bataille Syndicaliste, covered women's strikes, published arguments for and against women working, and supported - oficially at least - women's right to join unions and to obtain equal pay.

However, even among syndicalist militants who tried to come to terms with what was called 'the woman question', there were differences. Male militants displayed a different attitude from female militants. Moreover, those writing on the subject who could be discerned as workers - rather than members of the national leadership - often expressed attitudes different from those of their leaders. This was particularly true in the case of

female workers. Their own view of themselves was practical and realistic, their concerns those of industrial workers everywhere. Female militants, on the other hand,sometimes indulged in class prejudice, or displayed stereotypical notions about women which they held in common with their male counterparts. Thus, for example, Marcelle Capy's sympathetic series of women industrial workers tended to focus on the horrors of women's lives in the factories, at the expense of understanding those same women's efforts on their own behalf. So shocked was this educated Parisienne at the Nord ouvrières' conditions that she painted women lost in despair, impotent in the face of their own exploitation.

However, the views of scarce female militants were mostly irrelevant in shaping an official CGT line on the issue of women workers. It was, rather, the male view, as expressed in official publications and at syndical congresses, that determined the syndicalist approach to ouvrières in the decades from 1880-1914. A disaggregation of this line shows that male attitudes toward working women fell into three broad categories. Some held a patronising view of 'the weaker sex' which they demonstrated by overemphasising the novelty of women's strikes and by exaggerating the misery of women's working conditions. Others clung to the conviction that woman's 'true' identity was linked to her biological relations with men - whatever the salient features of her life in the factory. These

writers emphasised women's motherly attributes, and their roles as recipients of male desire and care. The last group of thinkers chose a safe alternative, which used striking women workers merely as a mirror for less rebellious male workers. In this view, ouvrières were the 'other',[4] the outsiders. They were thus never presumed to be the audience for these militants' comments about them, nor were they ever considered the proper constituency of French syndicalism.

The 'weaker sex' view fell into two sub-categories. In the first, male writers displayed surprise and joy at women's militance, exaggerating its uniqueness. Others fell into rapturous descriptions of the horrors of women's working lives, thereby implying that the 'gentle sex' was far more at risk in the factories than the men.

The following sections will analyse each of the three categories of CGT attitudes to women workers in turn, focussing on press reports between the late 1890s and 1914.

Patronisation: 'As a Man Looks at a Woman' (Wallace Stevens)

Georges Yvetot, one of the most articulate CGT advocates of women's rights[5] chose a patronising attitude to working women. His glee at women's militance was unbounded:

> J'ai parlé de l'entrain du courage et de l'initiative des femmes dans cette lutte. Toujours très nombreuses aux réunions, infatigables dans l'organisation des soupes communistes, téméraires dans les manifestations, elles eûssent été terribles si des bagarres sérieuses avaient pu réussir à être la suite des multiples provocations policiers - entreprises contre les grévistes. 6

His paternalistic tones sometimes verged on the absurd. Describing a strike of young seamstresses in Paris, Yvetot fell to using coy diminutives and flowery metaphors:

> Elles ne craignent pas, nos chères midinettes, les odieux "chardons [by 'thistles', Yvetot meant scabs and spies] que M. Lepine appelle ses 'paquerettes'. Midinettes, mes amis, barvo! pour votre courage, mais de grâce, ne vous laissez pas touchir ni froler par les chardons odieux qui poussent sous les pas des travailleurs en lutte sur leur champ de Grève! Si vous ne pouvez, de vos pieds mignons, écraser les chardons, jeunes-midinettes, evitez-les! 7

When food riots broke out in the Nord in 1911, it was Yvetot who declared that local merchants were in for a surprise at women's militance. "Vous ne savez pas que rien ne peut arrêter la belle furie d'une mère dont les petits manquent de pain ou manquent de lait. Prenez garde!" 8

Other syndicalist writers used similar terms when describing women's protests. Striking women were always 'courageuses citoyennes'. 9 Discussing the variety of women's strikes in 1911 and 1912, Francis Million (another CGT women's rights advocate) wrote, 'des militantes hardies et éclairées se sont relevées, étonnant nos

camarades par la vigeur de leur attitude et leur résolution dans la lutte".[10] Carried away by similar enthusiasm, another reporter declared one strike to be "the great awakening of women after centuries of sleep!".[11]

Biology Was Destiny

Some writers held a less enthusiastic view of women working, and argued that women's biology could not support long hours in factories. They shared the opinions of writers such as Jules Michelet and Jules Simon, and deplored the implacable evolution of French industry which 'tore' women from their homes.[12] During the mass silkworkers' strike in the Gard in 1906, when 5,000 female workers struck successfully for higher wages, one observer saw only "milliards de mères de famille, de jeunes filles que la société a arrachées au foyer familial..." [13]

Given the fact that at the turn of the century few working class French women remained in the 'foyer familial', supported by fathers or husbands, such ideas were offered either disingenuously, by commentators who preferred weak, subservient women in the Proudhonian mold, or sincerely, by middle class observers whose own female relations did not work outside the home. Others offered such views hoping to support moves to return women to subservience in the home.[14]

Even among those who ostensibly supported women's right to work, and to attain economic independence from men, these views sometimes emerged. Voix du Peuple's regular feature, titled 'L'Exploitation de la Femme' offered some examples. In February, 1905, the column reported a request received from Parisian corsage makers for help and advice in founding their own syndicat. The reporter, a male syndicalist leader, offered no advice or help, however. Instead his report focussed solely on the misery suffered by these ouvrières. "On ne saurait rien imaginer de plus affreux que l'existence de ces pauvres femmes!", he wrote. No further reference to their initiatve appeared.[15]

The series of reports on female industrial workers which ran in Bataille Syndicaliste in 1913-14 echoed this tone. And when the Couriau affair of 1913[16] provoked a fresh spate of arguments for and against women's work, the misery of ouvrières' conditions was constantly deployed to support those against.

Occasionally, such arguments, dependent on a sentimental view of French womanhood, were undercut by the implication that male workers were better able to withstand industrial poisons or dangerous conditions.[17] Such sanguine views of male workers' fortitude in the face of hazardous and unhealthy work were hardly likely to win long-term support from a struggling male rank and file, however much they played to prejudices about male superiority.

As for the female rank and file, they were just as unlikely to be lured into CGT syndicats by propaganda that over-emphasised their unsuitability for work - particularly as most of them had no alternative but starvation. Even less appealing was the constant reiteration by some observers that factory work quickly turned young, pretty girls into prematurely old, ugly, careworn women. One militant wrote, for example, "It is not unusual to see young girls of 20 with thin faces and emaciated bodies, worn out and completely riddled with consumption".[18] Another noted the "sad, sorrowful faces" of "anaemic" women workers, "pale and worn with care".[19] And another described striking sugar refiners in these words: "look at them as they come from work. Ask yourself, is this the lot reserved for women? ...Girls of 14 and 15, already with the thin faces of women".[20] Even the sympathetic Marcelle Capy submitted to the belief that the loss of her looks was the most painful penalty exacted from an ouvrière. She wrote, "they are sickly and sad, eaten up with anaemia". The "little pale varoleuses" were "grey with dust and with work".[21] Of other textile workers she wrote, "Sackcloth flaps on their bellies. They walk toward the store, bent in half, so exhausted, so crushed, that it is impossible to guess their age".[22] And finally, sixteen-year-old spinners were "no more developed than a normal twelve-year-

old, with yellow skins, drawn faces...always, tuberculosis eyed them".[23]

Ouvrières as Outsiders

However accurate such portraits, they hardly invited female workers to join unions led by those who articulated such views. Such tactlessness on the part of CGT reporters supports the argument that these ouvrières were not seen as a possible constituency, but instead as outsiders. Their portrait was drawn not for their consumption, but for a male audience, in an effort to provoke male sympathy and outrage. Furthermore, ouvrières' strike activity was offered to that male audience as exemplary. Thus male workers were exhorted to follow the examples set by striking women.[24] Of a female strike in the Saone, Yvetot observed, "...le sexe prétendu faible est mieux à la hauteur des événements sociaux qui peuvent surgir que certains syndiques incapables d'action pauvres de courage et d'énergie!" [25] Describing the cooperative formed by the laundresses of Villefranche, he added, "...cette Association de femmes est bien capable de donner l'exemple aux hommes pour l'association comme elles l'ont donné dans la lutte qui leur vaut d'être rejetées de partout".[26] Five years later, in 1910, Yvetot's tone was even more cloying: "Mais, combien il est encore plus reconfortant de les

voir donner aux hommes, aux ouvrières des leçons quotidiennes d'énergie, de bravoure et d'endurance!" [27]

Such exhortations were consistently directed not at workers in general, but instead at males only, generally regarded as the CGT's natural constituency. Francis Million pointed out, for example, that women's strikes "struck our comrades by the vigour of their attitude and their resolution in the struggle". [28] Another reporter appealed to his male readers by observing that striking sugar workers "do not forget their duties, but instead bring their mending to strike meetings". [29] And always these writers instructed their male readers that they must organise these women. "Can we chase all the women from the textile factories?", asked one writer. "No. It is better, then, to organise them..." [30]

Perhaps the most invidious argument of all was that advanced by those who believed that men should educate women because they in turn were the 'natural educators' of children. Yvetot wrote,

> De plus n'oublions pas que les idées mises en la tête des femmes sont mises dans l'humanité. Elles font les usages, créent les croyances et les moeurs...

Thus, he added, "we should teach them the best social ideas". [31] Francis Million agreed: "Consciente de son rôle d'éducatrice naturelle, la mère fera naître dans le cerveau de l'enfant des idées saines et généreuses..." [32]

In spite of the interference of prejudice with what were often laudable syndical attempts to support the movement for women's equality, and in spite of the fact that most male militants could not separate their deeply held convictions about 'woman's place' from their belief in the justice of that equality, the CGT in the years after 1905 was deeply involved in the movement to liberate working women. There were organised women in the CGT, and they provided ample evidence of their struggle against exploitation, which in turn had a salutary effect on the CGT's official position on women's right to work. We shall turn next, therefore, to an examination of the women's side of the CGT coin.

Women and the CGT: The View from Below

To what extent were the prejudices of male militants shared by organised, or unorganised female strikers in the Belle Epoque? Only two women textile workers have left accounts of their struggles from which some generalisations may cautiously be drawn. One, Lucie Baud, wrote a long article recounting silkworkers' strikes in the Isère, between 1883, when she entered a Vizille factory (at the age of 12) and 1908. (See Chapter 8, supra.) The other witness to the difficulties of women textile workers vis-à-vis the national syndicat (the Fédération

ouvrière de l'industrie textile) was Louise Leyssieux, whose epistolary debate with Vector Renard, the Fédération's president, suggested that relations between male and female union leaders were problematic, to say the least.[33] In addition to these sources, a few articles by male workers offered their views about their female colleagues.

In the period under discussion, Lucie Baud was one of the most active textile ouvrières in France.[34] She worked among the most militant group of female workers - the silkworkers of the Isère. She was, in fact, unusual among textile ouvrières. She was single, and therefore able to travel to distant meetings, and to risk being fired or blacklisted for union organising. She was also highly literate - a testament to the efficacy of Isère institutrices' efforts.[35]

When one compared Baud's writing about her life as a worker, striker, and strike leader, with the reports that filled the syndicalist press in our period, one is struck by Baud's failure to offer any of the stereotypical responses to women apparent in male militants' reports. Instead of maundering on about women's pitiful conditions, of mothers' pathetic faces, Baud took a practical, realistic tack. Her pride in women' activities stemmed from their quick and efficient response to strike conditions. Her applause was mainly reserved for the help which came from nearby syndicats, in Lyon, or Grenoble -

more often than not in the form of male militants with organising skills. She showed no surprise at women's militance, and no particular amazement at the arrival of male help. When she described textile workers 'waking up' to their exploitation, she used 'ouvriers' to include all who had "finally organised themselves into syndicats".[36] At no time did she lament the greater passivity or weakness of women, or their loss of girlish looks to the toil of the factories. All her disdain was, in fact, reserved for the patronat.[37] Even her feminism - i.e. her strong sense of solidarity with other women - rarely showed itself in her articles, except on the single occasion (already noted) when she and her fellow strikers discovered the appalling exploitation of Italian ouvrières working in the next town.[38]

Concrete experiences of work and strikes therefore lay at the base of Lucie Baud's pragmatic reactions to her situation in these years. Likewise, her successor - as secretary of the Isère silkworkers' syndicat - Louise Leyssieux, demonstrated little penchant for ideological embellishments. Compare, for example, her fairly straightforward plea for strike help (sent to Victor Renard in 1907), to Georges Yvetot's reports of strikers: "More than five hundred ouvrières," she wrote, "some mothers of families, have been out of work, in the midst of a rigourous winter, for four months..."[39] Compared to Yvetot, Leyssieux was restrained. When her

plea elicited no aid from the national textile federation, Leyssieux wrote again to Renard, this time speculating that the POF-linked federation was in the habit of ignoring them because they were women, and thus not eligible to vote.[40]

Renard's sarcastic response to Leyssieux's letter might well have provoked hyperbole from the women, but it did not. Thus to his hostile comment that the women were behaving in a typically female, "hysterical" manner, and doubtless expected the union to "buy them pianos for their afternoon leisure", Leyssieux replied calmly: "Mais ce qui dépasse l'imagination la plus fertile, c'est certainement l'idée que nous puissions nous procurer des pianos avec le secours du citoyen Renard!"[41]

Although both Baud and Leyssieux came from the Isère, and not from the Lille area, it seems reasonable to suppose that textile <u>ouvrières</u> in the Nord department might well have put their demands in similarly pragmatic, work-oriented terms had they been literate and articulate. Some years later, one militant Lille textile worker, Martha Desrumeaux, recounted her interwar strike experiences in terms reminiscent of Leyssieux's and Baud's writing, although her language was stronger.[42] (In fact, it earned her to sobriquet, 'la Passionaria Flamande'. It was said that "her inflammatory rhetoric terrorised the great patrons".) Desrumeaux's portrait of female textile workers in fact came closer to that

offered by the police spy in 1909 (see pp206-7 supra) than to that painted by CGT writers at the turn of the century.

Taken together, the attitudes expressed by these witnesses suggest at least, that all the rhetoric about the pathetic nature of women's work, about women's loss of beauty, or about their 'natural place in the home', passed by most female textile workers in the Nord or elsewhere, though of course generalisations about the reactions of most textile workers to such CGT propaganda must remain speculative. Nevertheless, the gap between expressions of male prejudices about women and the reality of ouvrières' daily lives was a wide one.[43]

At this point, it is important to re-emphasise two points that have been made elsewhere. Firstly, both women workers' own accounts and those of male observers - however shaded by stereotype - offered a portrait of women primarily concerned with work-related issues. Although my research was by no means exhaustive,[44] there was no evidence to support an argument that female workers directed their interests toward special 'female' issues. Secondly, the behaviour of male and female workers - and their families and communities - during strikes suggests that at least some parts of the urban, industrial working class were more homogeneous, and mutually supportive, than sometimes argued, particularly during the years

before external political and economic organisations began to impose other modes of behaviour on working-class communities (i.e. roughly until 1906).[45]

Perhaps a more extensive analysis would indicate that industrial workers who had no experience of women staying at home, un-waged during most of their adult lives, were less likely to feel threatened by, or hostile to, female industrial workers. Certainly it was true that most hostility to women workers in our period came from printers and compositors, who worked in a traditionally male, and artisanal trade.[46] These artisans were threatened by increasing numbers of skilled women printers - a situation without analogy in the mixed-sex textile industry.

A CGT's Women's Organisation

The CGT's Comité d'action féministe syndicaliste (its sole effort at the separate organisation of working women), was formed in 1907, in response to pressure from bourgeois feminists, whose activities created two competitors for the CGT in its struggle to recruit ouvrières. One was the Office du travail feminin (voted by the Chambre in 1906), and the other was the Ligue Féminine syndicale d'action (modelled on the British Women's Trade Union League). The latter was led by the

most famous of France's bourgeois feminists, Marguerite Durand.[47]

Pressure from Durand and her colleagues forced the CGT to allow the creation of a women's group with its national structure. The resulting Comité, led by Maximilenne Biais[48] enjoyed only an ephemeral existence. Announcements of its meetings and activities appeared only sporadically throughout the years before the First World War, although by 1913-14, it appeared to have begun to achieve some success.[49] Most of its rhetoric - as recorded in the CGT press - was spent on debates with male chauvinists in unions like the Fédération du Livre, or on attempts to clarify the differences and similarities between bourgeois feminist convictions and those held by syndicalists (e.g., the primacy of the sex, or the class, struggle).[50]

The effects of the Comité d'action féministe syndicaliste among working women were greatest in the Isère, where the instutrices joined forces with the silk-workers in three areas of activity: socialism, feminism, and syndicalism.[51] The extent of syndicalist-feminist activity in the Nord is unclear. Two references to such activity exist, one in an announcement of a Roubaix meeting, attended by "quatre femmes du groupe d'action syndicaliste",[52] and one in an article about the Rhône, which referes to a Lille counterpart to that

department's women's organisation.[53] However, the greater influence of the Guesdists on the workers of the Lille arrondisement suggests that such CGT activity in that area was minimal.

Conclusions

The upper ranks of the Confédération générale du travail contained a number of male militants who involved themselves with the problem of organising female workers - particularly in the years after 1905. Their journals, Voix du Peuple and La Bataille syndicaliste, give women's activities extensive coverage, which increased during the pre-war years, peaking after the 1913 Couriau affair.

The explanation for this interest is complex. One Parisian ouvrière recalled:

> A cette époque, les hommes syndiqués étaient féministes. Sans doute pensaient-ils que les femmes étaient indispensable pour la Grève Générale, qui occupait tous les esprits, et qu'ils croyaient proche... [54]

Her explanation doubtless had some accuracy in the period before the planned general strike of 1906; when that failed, however, the CGT's interest in organising women did not falter. Indeed, judging from the number of press stories, and the founding of the Comité d'action féministe syndicaliste in 1907, it increased.

It is likely that the failure of that general strike, coupled with evidence of increasing female militance (both among Durand's followers and English suffragettes, whose exploits garnared copious publicity from anarchists in the CGT) led the CGT leadership to increase their interest in the female proletariat. Their campaign to unionise women in turn brought to the fore the variety of prejudice and belief that underlay male efforts to develop both a theory and a practice adequate to the difficult task.

Because so much prejudice and so many stereotypes informed the leadership's approaches to women, however, the results were less than they hoped. In fact, the gap between their observations of women's economic struggles and the actual interests of the female workers widened. By 1914, the intricate and elaborate theoretical structure erected by the leaders, supported by the pylons of a few women's organisations scattered around France, lacked any genuine contact with the overwhelming majority of ouvrières. In short, neither the CGT national leadership, nor the feminist militants of the C.d.A.F.S. succeeded in capitalising on ouvrières' increasing economic militance.

The gap between militants' ideas about working women's interests, and the expressed interests of those same women gradually became an abyss. Thus while male leaders told ouvrières that they were special victims of rapacious capitalism, which had torn them from their

natural place - the home - and their natural duties - as mothers,[55] the women replied in what was virtually a foreign language.[56] Work, to such women, represented freedom and economic independence. They wanted higher wages and shorter hours, not a shove back into the dependence of working class ménagères - especially as most such were forced to work in sweated trades merely to make the family's financial ends meet.[57]

This thesis is, of course, only peripherally concerned with relations between the CGT and women workers; the problem has been discussed in order to highlight elements of its history, which affected the socialist party's development of a policy toward female proletarians. Nevertheless, even this brief overview suggests one hypothesis hitherto neglected by historians: that is, that the years around the turn of the century were crucial in the continuing failure of French syndicalism to organise the female workforce.[58]

CHAPTER 10

THE PARTI OUVRIER FRANÇAIS AND THE FEMALE PROLETARIAT

i. The Early Years

However muddled the CGT's reaction to women in France's industrial workforce, it was still clearer than that of the organised socialist movement. The syndicalists' lack of doctrinally-directed,[1] centrally-organised movement allowed greater felxibility of action and interpretation among syndicalist leaders. Rank and file support was similarly diverse: the CGT held within its loose federalist structure both the remarkably male-chauvinist Fédération du Livre and the feminists of the Fédération des tabacs and the Syndicat des ouvriers et ouvrières en soiries de l'Isere.[2]

While the CGT's greater doctrinal and organisational flexibility was lacking from socialism, its diversity was not; indeed, before the unification of 1905, tendances proliferated with alarming rapidity at nearly every congress or meeting.[3] This diversity, however, differed markedly from that of the CGT. To borrow a simile from physics, the leading socialist tendances were atoms rather than fields. In other words, unlike the various groups of the CGT, each had a recognisable character, which could add protons or electrons but yet remain coherent. Thus by the turn of the century, five leading

socialist groups existed in France, each with a distinct doctrinal and organisational identity: Possibilists, Allemanists, Blanquists, Independent Socialists and Guesdists (POF).[4]

Of these, only the Guesdists are of interest to the historian strictly concerned with the Lille area in this period. Their hold on the electorates of Lille and Roubaix - though not always firm - was unchallenged by other socialist groups. In Tourcoing as well, in spite of the general weakness there of socialist politics in our period, no other left-wing movement played any significant role.

The single most distinctive characteristic of Guesdism in these years was its tight central organisation, grounded in a marxist (or what they believed to be a marxist) ideology.[5] This should be held in mind, therefore, in this chapter's examination of the changing socialist response to the presence of women in the period between the first workers' congresses of the late eighteen-seventies and the coming of war in 1914. The major practical activity of the Guesdists was the building of a national organisation, characterised by a highly centralised administrative structure. The theoretical accompaniment to this growth was an ever more carefully articulated marxism, the nucleus of which was the proclaimed inevitability and imminence of that clash

between capital and labour which would bring the socialist revolution.

Thus it must be remembered in any history of these years that the Guesdists were striving to build a new kind of administrative configuration - one with a hierarchical structure grounded on a democratic base. The sole function of such a structure would be to prepare the industrial working class for its revolutionary future. The fact that half of this constituency was female was, as we shall see, necessarily an important consideration but a fact which was nonetheless treated as peripheral - to be exploited only in moments of crisis or when international and national pressures pushed it to the forefront.

While the history of the CGT's relations with women workers begins four or five years after the turn of the century, relations between socialists and women go back much earlier, to the first workers' congress in Paris in 1876.[6] Therefore, we too must begin there. For the purposes of analysis, the history of these relations is divided into three sections: firstly, the national-level socialist response to the 'women question' and to women; secondly, manifestations of these relations at a local level, and thirdly the development of a socialist doctrine which described the emancipation of women in general and proletarian women in particular. All three

elements - the national, the local and the theoretical - played a part in the doctrinal configuration which would come to comprise the first socialist-feminism.

The first post-Commune workers' congress, held in Paris in 1876, was perhaps the last gasp of Proudhonist ideas of mutualism and cooperation. On the question of working women, which was the first issue on the agenda, many of the delegates exhibited a Proudhonist opposition of women working outside the home.[7] As Jules Guesde noted several years later, this 1876 congress propagated what he saw as a serious misconception about the role of women in society - that was, the notion that women existed to be supported by men.[8] Nevertheless, the congress saw the first stirrings of a new position, when some delegates called for the fixing of an equal wage for 'similar' work done by men and women.[9]

The next congress in Lyon in 1878 retained the Proudhonist line on the question of working women, although the minority position in favour of women working was more strongly represented by the feminist, Marie Bonnevial, (part of the Guesdist faction) and by the presence of a mixed <u>syndicat</u> of <u>instituteurs</u> and <u>institutrices</u>.[10] The Guesdist position on the question was clear from this point on - though it was not always evident in the practice of individual Guesdists. In the words of Jules Guesde:

> La place de la femme n'est pas plus au foyer qu'ailleurs. Comme celle de l'homme, elle est partout, partout où son activité peut et veut s'employer...Le mal n'est pas dans le travail, même industriel, de la femme, mais dans le prélèvement, dans la dîme capitaliste, dont le travail féminin, comme et plus que le travail masculin, est aujourd'hui l'object...Assurer à la femme comme à l'homme le développement intégral et la libre application des ses facultés. Assurer d'autre part aux travailleurs, sans distinction de sexe, le produit intégral de leur travail. Là est toute la solution.[11]

Guesde's unequivocal position helps explain the early Guesdist adherence of a group of remarkable female militants between 1876 and the turn of the century (including Paule Mink, Elisabeth Renaud, Louise Samoneau, Aline Valette). And Guesde's position was not merely abstract and theoretical, but instead found a voice in Guesde's journal, L'Egalité (which he edited from 1879 to 1882)[12] and in the local activities of Guesdists in the Lille arrondissement during the 1880s and 90s.

Among the eight articles concerning women, published in that journal between January and July, 1878 (it ceased publication after Guesde's arrest in the latter month, and did not resume until January of 1880) were two long theoretical pieces: in January, 'Le Travail des femmes', and in July, 'De la famille'. They are worth discussing at length, because together they articulated the official position of the early Parti Ouvrier on the question of working women.

'Le Travail' began with the assertion that women's work was not an issue that could be isolated from that of work in general, as had been done at so many workers' meetings.13 But women's place in the issue was unique; "Il est certain, par exemple, qu'actuellement dans les conditions économiques d'aujourd'hui, la femme ne peut pas vivre, même mal vivre, de son travail." Thus the marxist belief that male workers' wages could not fall below those necessary for the reproduction of the labour force, clearly did not apply in reality to female workers. The 'law', in short, "disparaît lorsqu'il s'agit du travail féminin'. Why did this 'loi de fer' collapse in the case of ouvrières? "Parce que l'ouvrière pouvant trouver dans son sexe, transformé en marchandise, les ressources qui lui manquent, la rémuneration de son travail n'a plus besoin d'être assez élevée pour lui permettre de subsister." The capitalists were assured that ouvrières could survive on less than subsistence wages; women thus became serious competitors for men's jobs. Male workers, Guesde added, thus had a thousand good reasons for prescribing "la femme au foyer". But this, he argued, was both an unrealistic and unethical position. If women's work constituted an evil in the present system, it must be made a good, as women's place was no longer merely in the home. "Pourquoi", he demanded,

> à quel titre, l'enfermer, le parquer dans son sexe, devenu en même temps que sa seule raison d'être, son seul moyen d'être? L'homme, lui aussi, a des fonctions qui répondent à son sexe, ce que ne l'empêche pas d'être en plus médecin, artiste, ouvrier de la main ou de l'intelligence. Pourquoi, à quel titre, si épouse et si mère qu'on le veuille, pour ne pas parler de celle qui n'est et ne sera ni l'un ni l'autre, la femme ne jouirait-elle pas de la même faculté?

Given Marx's dictum that work is both the identifying characteristic of humans, and the means through which they attain their human fulfillment,[14] women who were supported by men would exist only conditionally. Guesde concluded his argument with an attack on Proudhonism: "Courtisane ou ménagère", he wrote, 'nothing is more contrary to socialism'. A woman, forced to be a housewife could not exist outside her home. She was, therefore, a courtisane - of her husband, because sexual relations were subordinated to economics. A well-ordered - i.e. socialist - society would allow women to work and thus to live, owing nothing to anyone.[15]

Guesde's description of the family's future under socialism was equally encouraging to his feminist followers. He pointed out again that once women ceased to be economically dependent on men, they would gain both intellectual and economic emancipation. Their family relations would thereafter be founded not on economics but on those factors that safeguarded the dignity of all parties: common interests, reciprocal satisfaction, love.[16]

From the late 1870s, the Guesdist wing of French socialism was openly supportive of women's emancipation. Nevertheless, there was trouble in paradise. First, the bourgeois feminist movement, which had no commitment to the liberation of the proletariat, immediately began to intrude upon the socialists' initial clarity by recruiting female socialist militants - some of whom stood for office in local elections - and by arguing that women's emancipation crossed class lines, a view that found support among many socialist women. Secondly, among male leaders, only Guesde expressed attitudes unmixed with male prejudices similar to those expressed by CGT militants.[17]

The problems posed by bourgeois feminism first appeared at the Marseilles congress of 1879. There, Hubertine Auclert, the most articulate of feminist delegates,[18] added to Guesde's strictly socialist description of women's emancipation a new concept. She proposed an alliance between 'enslaved women' and the 'enslaved proletariat'. Auclert's idea was not illogical, given the history of left wing movements in France, during which women of various classes had frequently struggled side by side with the poorer classes for the emancipation of both. The history of those alliances, however, had shown Auclert and others that the liberation of the male proletariat would not necessarily bring about women's emancipation. By

conflating socialism and feminism into a single theory and practice, they hoped to preclude the repetition of history, and to prevent a socialist society in which women remained subordinate to men.[19]

Nevertheless, Auclert's idea was profoundly unmarxist.[20] Its subsequent appeal to feminists in the Guesdist Parti Ouvrier (POF), founded in 1882, was to provoke serious theoretical and practical problems.

Thus serious lines of struggle between women and socialism were drawn. The crucial question of socialist women's loyalty - to the class struggle or to their sex's struggle for emancipation from all men - was posed from the earliest years of the development of a marxist political movement in France, as were corollary questions, e.g., ought women to form separate groups from those of men or ought they to remain within the larger political struggle of their class?

The Marseille congress acted on Auclert's ideas by passing as its first resolution support for "L'égalite absolue des deux sexes au point de vue des droits sociaux et politiques".[21] Further, the constitution of the new Parti des travailleurs socialistes de France was addressed to 'travailleurs socialistes des deux sexes',[22] and described itself as "une fédération des deux sexes, dans le but de rechercher l'application de la justice en propageant autant que possible les idées émises

au sein des Congrès ouvriers".[23]

The apparent unity on the issue of women was short-lived, however. When the Union fédérale du Centre (of the Parti des travailleurs) met in Paris in 1880, there were two votes on the issue of women, and both were passed only over vigourous opposition. (One demanded equal pay for similar work, and the second demanded equal, 'mixed'-sex education). The minority opposing these resolutions was not simply composed of residual Proudhonists, however. It included some Guesdists. These latter took this position on the grounds that such reforms were not possible until the revolution had totally transformed society. Thus the split at Paris in 1880 was not merely between Proudhonist chauvinists and feminists but instead involved a combination of socialists and Proudhonists (who became known as 'modérés') on the one hand and followers of Guesde on the other. Shortly thereafter, at Le Havre later in 1880, the first clear-cut split between socialist groups occurred.[24] The socialist women militants, led by Paule Mink, followed the Guesdists.[25]

After Le Havre, the nucleus of what became the POF was formed. It is to this group - particularly to the POF in the Lille area - that we turn next.

Before examining the POF's debate on the woman question, there is one additional strand to be identified within the Guesdists' position. That was the prejudice

that underlay the expressed feminism of many socialist militants. This attitude was most apparent in the words of the other leader of the Guesdists, Paul Lafargue. It was Lafargue's belief that the 'pre-industrial' world of the artisan family had been, for women at least, ideal. Then, "la femme était une vraie ménagère; elle filait la laine et le chanvre, tricotait les bas, taillait et cousait les vêtements, boulangeait le pain de la maisonnée, etc.; aidée de ses filles, elle pourvoyait à tous les besoins de la famille".[26] In Lafargue's language, the pre-industrial housewife 'provided'; her husband, significantly, 'produced'.[27] Industrialisation had, however, prevented the producing artisan from earning enough for his family. Thus the whole family had had to go to work. (Apparently, the family's women were not 'working' previously, but just 'providing'.) "Le mari," he added, "le père a dû livrer, a dû vendre sa femme et ses enfants au capitaliste".[28] Thus Lafargue joined those who saw men as producers and workers, and women as caretakers, who existed to be sold, along with their children, when the time came. He had inculcated <u>some</u> of the marxist doctrine about women, however. He concluded this particular description of the evils of industrialisation with the remark that at least it had delivered women from "la prison familiale", which had previously incarcerated a social being in isolated, domestic production.[29] (Why male artisans

were not similarly incarcerated, Lafargue did not say.) But at a subliminal level, Lafargue was not entirely convinced of women's equality to men. He shared this hesitancy with many male Guesdist militants, and it plagued socialists in the years following Le Havre, though the Guesdists never wavered in their official support for the feminist position articulated in the founding party platform, written in 1880. [30]

In 1881, at the Reims congress of the revolutionary socialists, delegates were primarily preoccupied with the attempt by Benoît Malon and Paul Brousse to break the hold of Jules Guesde on party policy. Nevertheless the woman question was again brought to the socialists' attention. In December, Jules Joffrin stood for a legislative seat in Montmartre, on a platform that was in part dictated by feminist demands. His posters proclaimed his commitment to "the complete emancipation, not only of the waged class, but of all human beings, without distinction of sex, colour, or nationality". Furthermore, Joffrin proposed an "equality of wage for workers of both sexes".[31] Guesde opposed Joffrin's candidacy on the grounds that these aspects of his platform altered 'Marx's' party platform (i.e. the 1880 programme that was to become that of the POF).[32] A knottier problem was posed the next year by the municipal candidacy (in Paris) of Léonie Rouzade, still a leader of the socialist Union des femmes, and an active speaker

on behalf of the party.[33] The Guesdists solved their dilemma by, in Charles Sowerwine's words, "turning a deaf ear" to her candidacy in the 12th arrondissement.[34] The Broussists, however, supported her, along with her Union's demand that women and workers form an alliance against their equal oppression. Thus when the socialists met again at St. Etienne, the women's union joined the Broussists, who split off from the Guesdists. The latter, on the other hand, retained some female adherents - those who advocated the primacy of the class struggle. In the words of Sowerwine, "Ainsi s'établit, dans le socialisme français, le schisme fondamental qui allait durer jusq'en 1905. Au coeur de ce schisme se trouvait la question des droits des femmes".[35]

The Parti Ouvrier and its Female Constituency: The First Decade, 1880-1890

In 1880, L'Egalité published the programme of the newly-formed socialist women's group, the Union des femmes, which added one further principle to those already articulated by Guesde. That was that women had a right to work at wages sufficient to enable them to support themselves and their children (emphasis added), without enslaving themselves to men.[36]

It was likely that this view that children belonged

to women, rather than to 'the family', or worse, to the father, resulted from the bitter experience of many French women in the nineteenth century who were forced to yield their children to husbands whose legal property they were.[37] Nevertheless, it was an important counter to the prevailing bourgeois view (and for that matter, the Proudhonist one) that women 'deserved' to be supported in the home so that they could care for, but not support, the family's children. There was a fine line, but a real one nonetheless, between the view that children benefitted from women's care, and that both they and women would benefit from women's support.[38]

In the 1880s, Geusde's view, shared by most of the women involved in founding the Union des femmes, followed Auclert's line that women's emancipation would come about only hand in hand with the liberation of the proletariat. In Guesde's words, "the proletariat fights for women and women for the proletariat".[39] It was not clear, then or later, whether the female half of the proletariat was different from, or the same as, women in general.

L'Egalité continued its coverage of the socialist women's movement and of working women's conditions and problems throughout 1880.[40] In July of that year, the paper fell afoul of the Union. Its report of the Congrès ouvrier collectiviste révolutionnaire de la région du centre objected to the Union's vote in favour of women's

claims to equal civil and political rights. L'Egalité supported women's emancipation in theory, but backed the minority position at the Congress that women's rights were less important than the emancipation of the entire proletariat. After all, Guesde argued, "the proletariat", (obviously male), "had possessed the rights women were claiming for a number of years without taking power"[41] (emphasis added). Thus was the problem formally posed that continued to vex the issue of women's emancipation throughout the Belle Epoque: were women primarily part of the class struggle or the sex struggle? And which would socialist women put first?

These theoretical and organisation problems initially found few reflections at the local level. When in 1882 Roubaix's POF journal, Le Forçat, told one textile mill owner that his mistreatment of ouvrières would quickly drive them into the socialist party, the prediction rapidly proved accurate.[42] In the fall of that year, the female workforce of the giant spinning mill, LeBlan frères (Moulins-Lille) went en masse to Le Forçat's offices to solicit both financial aid and advice on strike methods.[43] Le Forçat responded enthusiastically by printing full reports of the strike and asking its readers to help. "In order not to refuse them," the editors wrote, "and in the name of solidarity without

regard to race or sex, this paper sends out a call for help". [44]

This was, of course, a re-statement of the PO's official position. Next, however, the editors turned to a less sympathetic, Lafargue-like description of local working women. They compared the LeBlan ouvrières' activities with what they argued were the more usual actions of female workers. Thus,

> les ouvrières qui, autrefois, dans des cas semblables, se mettraient à parcourir la ville en chantant et en dépensant leur argent, puis finalement rentraient à l'atelier, sont très-décidées aujourd'hui à maintenir leurs droits; elles se conduisent d'une manière très digne. Une grande partie est munie de carnets et fait des souscriptions pour soutenir leurs compagnes. [45]

Amidst the paper's firm statement of solidarity "without regard to sex", was a rider that effectively disassociated these particular women from women in general.

In spite of this mixed initial response from the socialists, the LeBlan women's intransigence in the face of both patronal and police pressue began to convince dubious editors that women were not 'normally' frivolous. In subsequent resports, writers highlighted women's resistance, and told those ouvriers still working at LeBlan that they ought to demand their livrets and join the women's strike. [46] By the end of October, as the strike continued, the editors were solidly behind the women's efforts. When morale began to flag, Le Forçat wrote to Louise Michel, then visiting Brussels: "Personne

autre qu'elle pouvait relever le moral de ces malheureuses prêtes à succomber aux éxigences de l'exploiteur", they wrote. 'That generous citizen', agreed immediately to come to Lille, and to speak at a meeting organised for 29 October.[47] Although 6,000 francs were raised at that meeting, however, the strike collapsed in the face of hostility, much of it expressed in the bourgeois press, provoked to vitriol by Michel's visit.[48]

When reporting these acid responses to Michel, Le Forçat's writers had no trouble discerning the hatred she aroused, but they attributed it entirely to her status as a famous representative of the French working class.

To some extent, this assessment was accurate. Thus Progrès du Nord pointed out Michel's "scarcely democratic fur mantle".[49] However, most of the bourgeois press reports denigrated Michel's status as a female militant. Thus one reporter neglected the content of her speech in favour of a lengthy and detailed description of her unpleasant physical appearance:[50] "One knew at once," he wrote, "the truly repugnant face of the neocaledonian virago: the wide forehead, the thick lips, the bilious, lack-luster complexion, the short hair, gathered into a bun at the back."[51] If the press's hostility had been solely class hostility, the writer would surely have reported Michel's remarks applauding the women strikers for "revolting against the tyranny of capital".[52] And, he

would have added a report of the Catholic students' attack on the car carrying Michel from the station to the talk, and their heckling during the talk which turned the meeting into a "riot", according to Le Forçat.[53]

Whatever the causes of such hostility, however, the tactic was successful. Le Forçat claimed that the bourgeois press had succeeded in dividing the women strikers, thus breaking the strike. Nevertheless, the paper took the optimistic view that now that the ouvrières' militance had been provoked, they would soon organise and "put to flight all the exploiters and their flunkeys". "Rira bien, qui rira le dernier", the paper added.[54]

In the same autumn, Le Forçat highlighted other activities of women textile workers.[55] In September the paper reported that Reims wool workers had held a civil, rather than a religious, fête, at which girls had dressed themselved in red, with phrygian bonnets on their heads. Léonie Rouzade was the featured speaker, and her topic was 'La Femme au XIX^{e} Siècle'. In it, Rouzade argued against the double exploitation of women. The paper reported that she was "hotly applauded" when she argued for the primacy of women's struggle against their inferiority in society.[56] There was no attempt on the part of the paper's editors to point out that Rouzade's ideas conflicted with the POF's position, which at that

time argued that women's emancipation, in the home or in civil society, took second place to the class struggle. This suggests that at the local level, at least, the coming split between bourgeois feminism and socialist goals was not yet apparent.

In November and December of 1882, the POF held more meetings in Lille and Roubaix, which featured female speaker. Reports of these meetings, however, did not emphasise the feminist content of speeches, but instead focussed on the solidarity of all workers against the local bourgeoisie, again represented by local Catholic students. In fact, the paper specifically invited "members of Catholic cercles, Catholic students, masons, republicans and bourgeois", to come to try to contradict the speakers. At one meeting these included "a peasant from the Vosges", "Citoyenne Clementine of Beauvais", and two local men.[57] Unfortunately, the results of this invitation were not offered.

Le Forçat's year ended with two final stories of rebellious ouvrières, both in Roubaix. Of one ouvrière the paper wrote,

> Nous addressons nos félicitations à la courageuse ouvrière qui a su tenir tête aux prétensions de son exploiteur. Nous la présentons comme exemple à un trop grand nombre d'ouvrières qui se laissent tondre trop facilement. [58]

The following year, 1883, saw only one indication that the issue of women's emancipation remained important

to local socialists, but it was a significant one. On the 4th of March, the paper's masthead, which before had read "Considérant que l'émancipation de la classe productive est celle de tous les êtres humains sans distinction de race", added - without comment - "de sexe ni de race".[59] Otherwise, all mention of women in the paper that year was incidental. For example, one anti-clerical meeting was reported as having been presided over by "citoyenne P", who spoke, abjuring women to abandon the confession and to raise their children as free-thinkers. [60]

In July 1883, Le Forçat ceased publication. It was replaced in the following year by Le Cri du Forçat. The preoccupation of this latter journal remained the struggle with the heavily Catholic patronat of the Lille arrondissement.[61] Such an emphasis was not surprising, of course, in these years of severe economic depression (see Chapter 3 for a description of the 'Great Depression' in the textile industry) when under- and un-employed workers of both sexes were heavily dependent for survival on both the actions of their employers and the whims of the bourgeois and Catholic controlled Bureaux de beinfaisance and other charities. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that in the period when groups of socialist women were beginning to organise, and were apparently flourishing in major textile cities, almost

no mention was made of the issue of women's liberation in the socialist paper.[62] Only once, in fact, in August of 1884, did the women question arise, when one anonymous writer complained that women were replacing men in the factories of Lille, Roubaix and Reims, "just as they had done in England". This author argued that the effect of the replacement was to lower wages and to [illegible] women from the home. "What happens", he asked rhetorically, "when women cannot accomplish the mission for which nature has suited them?"[63] The paper gave no answer. The article - the premises of which would rouse violent reaction following the re-awakening of interest in 'the woman question' after the turn of the century, sank without a trace.

In the spring of 1885, reports of socialist observances of the anniversary of the Commune, throughout France, twice specifically mentioned the participation of women - once in the report from Vierzon ('2000 citoyennes et citoyens'), and once in the report from Reims ('un grand nombre de citoyennes et de citoyens').[64] The appearance of yet another POF newspaper, Le Réveil du Forçat, in the fall of 1885, brought both a new masthead ("Considérant que l'émancipation de la classe productive est celle de tous les êtres humains sans distinction de sexe ni de race") and a re-statement of the PO's principles, this time in the form of its electoral programme.

And the same points were made about the political and economic emancipation of women - their right to work, at equal pay, and to obtain civil rights.[65] Nevertheless, in this year such woman-centered policies were still at least partly lacking the practice that would have lent them conviction. Thus in September the paper castigated one Roubaix wool processor, M. Morel, for replacing his trieurs de laine with "démoiselles à jolis minois", thus reducing his costs from 6 fr. a day to 2,50, per worker.[66] Ironically, the same issue of the paper carried an appeal to workers "of both sexes" to join the textile syndicat![67]

This issue of the justice of hiring women to replace wool trieurs continued to be discussed into October, though the facts and the tone conflicted among the various reports. Thus on October 4th, Le Réveil du Forçat reported the efforts of various wool mill owners to hire large numbers of cheap apprentices of both sexes in order to undercut the wages of trieurs. This article reflected no prejudice against female workers, but instead took a coldly economic line in describing the problem. Only a week later, however, another article in the same paper was hotly sarcastic to ouvrières. Its writer pointed out that M. Morel was giving the women only a few weeks training. Whereas it had before taken years to make a good trieur, women were trained "in just a few weeks". "Quel bon professeur!

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Quelles bonnes élèves!" the author added, his amour propre obviously wounded. His answer to the problem was suitably chauvinistic - the men should form a syndicat to resist "the untimely intrusion of women into their jobs".[68]

Male chauvinism was not, however, limited to deployment in an obviously threatening situation. In a Réveil de Forçat report of an election campaign dinner given by the bourgeois (republican) journal, La Lanterne, in the autumn of 1885, the writer directed his slurs against the wives of republican officials, in classic manner. Thus the reporter wrote that republican functionaries were reactionary because of their wives. Thus "le mari broute le chou républicain et la femme caresse le bouc monarchiste". He added,

> Puisque les femmes portent les culottes et mènent par le nez leurs maris, qu'elles ont eu soin de transformer en bêtes à cornes ce qui leur était bien dû, il n'y a qu'un remède: reconnaître la superiorité des femmes et leur donner les fonctions de leurs indignes maris. - Alors, au moins, on aura des fonctionnaires responsables. 69

Just as the 'pretty' trieuses were usurping the natural role of men, so were the bourgeois wives of republican leaders.

Not surprisingly, socialist feminist leaders cast around for other options among socialist parties in France during this period. However, although all the various

tendances were sympathetic to women's claims on paper, none was as consistently pro-women's rights as the Guesdists. Thus Benoît Malon's La Revue Socialiste frequently published articles on the issue during the decade of the 1880s, (many written by women who were usually identified among the Guesdists) [70] but the journal compromised the effect of the favourable articles by offering many by prominent 'antis'. Gustave Rouanet, [71] for example, wrote a piece in 1886 which argued that industrialisation had had nothing but deleterious effects on women. Before industrialisation, "on peut affirmer que la femme et l'enfant ne sont pas productifs". [72] Now, however, women could be found in 'promiscuous' workshops, separated from their families. [73]

Unlike the 1884 article in Le Cri du Forçat, which had provoked no response to a similar argument, Rouanet's piece prompted a harsh reply from one female reader, Nathalie Lemel. [74] In turn, Malon rushed into print his response to her criticism, saying that Rouanet's attitude was his own, and did not necessarily represent those held by the journal's editors. Nevertheless, the airing of such opinions - unaccompanied by criticism in the first instance - underlined the equivocal nature of most French socialists' support for women's civil, political, and economic rights.

The Guesdists, then, were the single tendance with a straightforward, consistent line on women's rights.

With only a few exceptions, this line held at the local, as well as at the national level. The electoral programme of the Lille and Roubaix POs, published early in 1888 (supporting the municipal candidacies of local socialists) outlined again the Guesdist position. The printed party platform began with a phrase familiar to readers of the local socialist press: "Considérant - que l'émancipation de la class productive est celle de tous les êtres humains sans distinction de sexe ni de race..."[75] The statement went on to articulate the principle first adopted by the minority Guesdists at the congrès du centre's meeting in 1880: that the liberation of women was the same as the emancipation of the productive class. This theoretical position in effect forced the feminist issue into the marxist one. On the practical level, however, the PO's election positions were straightforwardly feminist. Among the political demands was, "all the articles of the Code establishing the inferiority of the worker vis-à-vis the patron, and the inferiority of the woman vis-à-vis the man be abolished". Economic demands included "Egalité de salaire à travail égal pour les travailleurs des deux sexes". Other planks in the platform appealed to proletarians of both sexes: scholars' cantines (free school lunches), a distribution of clothes and shoes to children, the fixing of bread and meat prices, rent control, a programme to renovate unhealthy homes, free medicine

and drugs and a free municipal bath.[76] An appeal by the POF, printed a few days later, emphasised the benefits of these programme to 'pères de famille' - who were, of course, the voters.[77]

Although the local Parti Ouvrier may have anticipated some opposition to the feminist principles established in its electoral programme, it did not shirk the problem. Instead, it ran a series in Le Cri du Travailleur called 'Etude sur le programme du P.O.', which explained in painstaking detail the reasons behind the party's positions on various issues, including the vexed one of women's emancipation.

It is worth examining the arguments offered for four reasons: first, the presentation of issues at a local level, in election years,[78] reflected both the theoretical preoccupations of the party and Guesde's own choice of tactics. In other words, it was unlikely that the PO, having decided to enter legislative (1889) and cantonal elections, would have taken up positions directly against its own interests. Secondly, the local promulgation of a socialist view of women's place in the class struggle both reflected and influenced its development on a national scale. Thirdly, no historians of the development of socialism in the Nord have noted the primacy of the issue in the speaking and writing of the party militants in the late eighties - a fact which leads to the fourth reason for examining the arguments,

which is that through such an examination one might be able to show the error of historians' assumptions regarding the political inactivity of women textile workers.

The primary demand of the local Guesdiste platform in 1888 was for equal pay for equal work.[79] This position had four supporting premises: first, mechanisation had rendered women as capable of industrial work as men; second, because women were a cheaper labour force, they were more desirable to employers than men; third, ouvrières provided 'chair à plaisir' to the sons of the patronat; fourth, the sole solutions to these problems were to organise women together with men and to demand equal pay and work conditions.

The Guesdistes were aware that their solutions were not usually those proposed. Many male workers, one writer noted, demanded "Dehors de la femme!"[80] But marxists did not indulge themselves in nostalgia, but instead recognised the potential good in industrialisation (i.e. an industrial society could in theory provide enough to supply the needs of everyone). And where women were concerned, industrial progress offered them an unprecedented possibility: of becoming economically - and therefore socially - independent. Then, "parce qu'elle vivra par elle-même", she could "vivre pour elle-même".[81]

It is a pity that there is no direct evidence of

workers' reactions to this argument. Because women could not vote, the PO's subsequent electoral success can be taken only as evidence that the party's emphasis on women's liberation did not provoke a serious backlash among voting male workers.

Nevertheless, there were at least three positive elements in this socialist position at the local level. First, the fact that considerable attention was given to women's issues in the party platform, in newspaper and handbill propaganda, and in electioneering speeches supports the view that the ouvrières of the Lille area were thought to be a key group in the constituency, despite their disfranchisement. In the close-knit workers' quartiers, where politics were cummunity- rather than party-based, it was doubtless true that elections could not be won with the organised opposition of half the workforce in a population. Second, the party's direct appeal to women, based on an assumption of their rationality - as workers and as parents - had some local consequences. Male leaders, including Henri Curette (mayor of Roubaix from 1892 to 1902) and Henri Chesquiere (who had a series of local offices in Lille until 1904, and became a deputy in 1906), actively supported local socialist women's groups, and continued to agitate for women's rights even after the Party's attention turned elsewhere in the late 1890s. Thirdly, it assured local ouvrières that they would find a sympathetic ear

at the local party headquarters; however mistaken a reaction their problems might provoke (e.g. Lafargue's mishandling of the mid-1890s strike),[82] at least they had a hearing. Moreover when a rare literate ouvrière addressed an argument to the local party paper, she was assured its appearance.[83]

While there exists only sparse evidence from which to estimate the extent of socialist' appeal to textile ouvrières, it must not be disregarded. As we have seen, some women in the three cities organised themselves into socialist women's groups (whose campaigns for school lunches and municipal crèches succeeded in Lille and Roubaix). Many hundreds more participated actively in syndicats rouges, and in socialist theatricals, fêtes, and Mayday celebrations.[84] In short, the words of one ouvrière, which appeared in Le Cri du Travailleur in 1888, doubtless expressed the feelings of many like her. Of the PO she wrote, "In rising up against the present state of affairs, and in reclaiming for their sisters in exploitation their rights...the proletarians of the Nord... have shown the new order, the truly human order that socialism will bring."[85]

Paul Lafargue was one of the first to articulate these changes. In February 1890 he wrote a lengthy piece on the family which appeared in Le Cri du Travailleur.[86] He made two points: firstly that capitalism destroyed the working class family's 'natural' unity (found in

pre-industrial artisan families), and secondly, that it reduced the bourgeois family to a meaningless set of monetary relations. In the first case, working class women were 'torn' from their homes, and prevented from accomplishing their maternal duties. In the second, bourgeois women became bored, overly sensitive, weak and idle creatures, whose only function, maternity, bored them. They neglected their children, preferring a life of affairs with other men.

Lafargue's hostility to women focussed on 'bourgeois women', whom he described with vicious sarcasm. Nevertheless, his view of working women, "unnaturally torn from the delights of housewifery", [87] was equally problematic, being clearly Proudhonist and anti-Guesdist. Its appearance in the local POF paper suggests that at least some of the socialists' Lille and Roubaix constituency would have found such views acceptable.

Still, the next issue of Le Cri du Travailleur offered an alternative view of the family - one which more closely followed Jules Guesde's position. [88] The writer argued that every kind of social organisation produced its own type of family. Thus capitalism had created a family based on economic relations, which socialism - by abolishing capitalist social relations - would exchange for a family based on love.

The family, then, was obviously under attack by non-socialists, and in French Flanders, where the

family unit was so obviously important (and, among the working class, economically crucial), socialist candidates were forced to take a stand. Lafargue's view, however, was literally reactionary: the only change he offered was a backward-looking one, in which women would return to 'providing' all the needs of their families inside their homes. The official line, which prescribed no particular roles for women, but instead referred vaguely to 'love relations' as the beneficiaries of the socialist revolution, straddled the line between Guesde's feminism and Lafargue's anti-feminism more successfully.

The crucial participation of textile ouvrières in the mass strike which followed Mayday in that year forced local socialists to return to the problem of the ouvrière's place in the class struggle. Even the most Proudhonist among the local party leadership could not ignore the visible presence of female workers in that May manifestation of the class struggle.

The party reacted quickly. Henri Ghesquière's first attempt at a 'position paper' on working women's rights appeared in Le Cri du Travailleur while the strike was still on.[89]

Ghesquière's article began by noting that some socialists had been misled by the use of the phrase 'les droits de l'homme' into thinking that women were

excluded. This was not the case; the phrase referred to all human beings. Nevertheless, he continued, "les droits de la femme" sometimes needed to be discussed separately, and this he intended to do.[90]

The succeeding argument had four premises. First, just as men possessed certain rights (e.g. to existence and to happiness) which they 'earned' by producing, so productive women possessed those rights.[91] Second, as men must actively exercise those rights in order to live, 'free and equal', so must women. Concomitantly, women's physical inferiority could not be proposed as a reason for limiting their rights, as it had no influence on production or on women's intelligence or morality. Third, because women were everywhere the 'slaves' of men - in the family, the nation, and society in general - they could not exercise their rights. Thus they were effectively deprived of life.

Like the practical consequences of the Guesdist position on elections, those stemming from Ghesquière's feminism were problematic. Thus while an argument in favour of women's equality might help recruit ouvrières to socialist syndicats and party organisations, it left open the problem posed by non-working class women. Nevertheless, the exigencies of party growth in 1890 effectively hid these flaws from view.

The following year, 1891, saw a heightening of Guesdist organisational activities, provoked in part by the POF's success in winning the approval of the International as the French marxist party (a distinction previously shared with the Possibilists).[92] The POF grouped itself into a tightly organised national party, whose structure was duplicated by regional, and then by local, parties. One consequence of the local party's tighter organisation was, first, the election of Lafargue to the Chambre in 1891, and second, the election of a socialist municipal council.

This Roubaix victory had two immediate local consequences: first, the council instituted several needed reforms, including a re-distribution of charitable funds (and a re-definition of eligibility), the creation of free crèches, and the beginning of plans for free municipal services promised by the POF;
and second, the Lille PO quickly followed suit winning control of that city council in 1895.

For working women, these changes had two, and in the long-run three, negative consequences. Firstly, electoral successes brought in their wake a natural focus on organising voters. As women did not vote, they became less essential to party activity. Secondly, the concentration on electoral politics turned attention

away from other party activities, including union organising. The Guesdists' loss of control of the national syndicalist movement, which occurred following the creation of the non-political Confédération Générale du Travail at Marseille in 1891, added to this neglect. As working women were most evident in economic struggles - i.e. strikes - this change augured badly for their fortunes within the party.

Finally a long term consequence of the founding of the socialist Second International after 1891 was the effect of other socialist partys' policies toward women on the French. Both the nearby Parti Ouvrier Belge and the powerful German Social Democratic Party (SPD) organised women into auxiliary units, which effectively rendered women secondary to the class struggle. [93]

The local Guesdist experiment with such auxiliary groups was not without a short-term success during the 1890s. The sparse information available shows the creation of a federated structure of comités des femmes, directed by a central bureau. [94] Bureau members included Anna Ghesquière, Citoyenne Delory, and three other women about whom nothing is known (from Lille), and Mme Carette (from Roubaix).

The Guesdist press offered wide coverage of the women's activities; editors delighted particularly in describing the hostility these groups provoked from the bourgeosie. [95] On January, 1893, the local Le Travailleur

noted with glee that the mayor of Lille was so worried about the women's activities that he forbade all public demonstrations. "One would think", the paper added, "that the women had sticks of dynamite under their skirts to blow up the Hotel de Ville".[96] Press reports often reported 'hundreds' of women at mass meetings of the groups.[97]

These groups evinced an uneasy mixture of socialism, feminism, and traditionalism. Thus they promulgated socialist ideas, but instructed the women that their role was to get their husbands into the party, and to educate their children to become the socialists of the future.[98] Their campaigns, as we have seen, ignored ouvrières' work-related problems in order to concentrate on 'mother's concerns'. Only once, during the Mayday demonstrations of 1893, did the women's groups take a work-oriented position, when they demanded the 8-hour day and a minimum wage.[99]

Of course these generalisations must be taken with a large pinch of salt, as they are supported by evidence left solely by men. It may be, in fact, that the over-emphasis on 'womanly' concerns expressed male reporters' views of what actually occurred in the Comités' meetings, from which men were usually excluded. (At a meeting of one Roubaix group L'Epeule men "crashed the gate". Mme Carette, who was presiding, told them they could remain if they "remained silent".)[100] Nevertheless, most evidence

suggests that the organised efforts of socialist women skirted the special problems faced by 'doubly enslaved' textile ouvrières.

In addition to pursuing their own campaigns, the women participated in most socialist activities in 1893 - from marches to local family fetes. In October, the Comités joined male socialist groups in organising a public meeting to benefit striking miners. Paule Mink and Ghesquière were featured speakers; the latter's subject was 'Women and Socialism'.[101] The following month the bureau of the Comité des femmes de Lille published Ghesquière's pamphlet, 'La Femme et le Socialisme', which argued a line similar to that described above.[102] Roubaix's socialist women were also represented at the Parti ouvrier's national congress, held in Paris in October 1893, by L'Emancipation des femmes and Droit des femmes.[103]

The organisation of local women into semiautonomous groups proved in the long run a fatal error. As Guesde's party was organised along increasingly tight and strictly-political lines, all the various local groups - including young socialists' clubs as well as women's comités - were discouraged.[104] The founding of the Nord federation of the POF in 1893 hastened the demise of such groups.[105]

But the national policies of the POF and the organisation of a male-controlled national textile federation sounded a death knell for local socialist women's groups.

Nevertheless, the Lille-Roubaix groups enjoyed two more years of existence before their final disappearance.[106] Part of the reason for the 2-year reprieve was the selection of a socialist feminist, Aline Valette, for the national council of the POF in 1893. (She remained in that post until her death in 1899.) Her theoretical position on women's emancipation was complex and often muddled; nevertheless, her influence on Lille area socialists, as well as on Jules Guesde, was such that her position deserves a detailed discussion.

Valette published a series of article on working women in Le Travailleur, beginning in the spring of 1894. In them, she offered her own curious mixture of socialism and what might be called 'separate - but equal' feminism.[107]

To summarise Valette's argument, whe believed that working women had two separate roles: first, their role as a substantial part of the waged albour force in France (she counted some 3,875,000 ouvrières and others in that year),[108] and second, the 'special' role as morally superior women. She mixed these two positions by encouraging the organisation of women into the PO, and by proselytising on behalf of the moral improvement such women would offer.[109]

The practical corollary of her position was an over-emphasis on women's roles as wives and mothers. Like Lafargue, she betrayed her acceptance of women's different nature by her language. Thus at one organisational

meeting she told ouvrières (addressed as 'wives and mothers') that the PO would shorten their days and raise their pay, which would then "protect the lives of your children and your nephews" (sic!). She pleaded with her audience, her 'pauvres soeurs de travail', to back their 'husbands, fathers and brothers' when they demonstrated. Finally, she concluded, "Faites votre devoir! Assez de misères et de larmes dans votre ménage". [110]

On another occasion, Valette voiced the prevalent feminist line, in terms reminiscent of those employed earlier by Hubertine Auclert. She told some 2,000 Lille socialists that all women were part of the proletariat, since they were all oppressed by men, regardless of their class. Working women, she added, were therefore doubly proletarian. [111]

Le Travailleur reported this speech, noting that "le discours éloquent de la citoyenne Valette" was "fréquemment coupé par des applaudissements nourris", and "salué par des acclamations prolongées". [112]

Certainly Valette's appeal to ouvrières on the grounds that they were exploited found echoes among local women. In 1894 the Groupe la Révanche des Femmes socialistes addressed the women of the working class quartier L'Epeule (Roubaix) in his words:

> Citoyennes, à l'heure ou la réaction capitaliste au pouvoir concentre toutes ses forces à barrer la route aux progrès sociaux, à tuer dans l'oeuf l'embryon d'une société meilleure appelée à faire

> disparaître, non seulement les inégalites et les maux sociaux, mais aussi les inégalités des sexes; à cette heure, disons-nous, les femmes doivent franchement entrer dans la lutte pour leur émancipation. [113]

Among these women, socialist principles took precedence over feminist ones, and no note of separatism was sounded at all. In fact, just the opposite. The message concluded with good humour: "Commes les femmes ont les rénons d'être bavardes, nous bavardons, mais ce sera de choses qui nous intéressent au plus haut point, et pour parvenir à notre bien-être social".[114]

Too much must not be made here of the gap between Valette's socialist-feminism and the ideas promulgated by local women. The Parti Ouvrier was still, in the 1890s, a young movement, and its leaders and their constituency were still struggling for both theoretical and practical clarity. Nonetheless, the differences between Valette and the Roubaix ouvrières was striking. More importantly, in the long run, Valette's emphasis on women's special nature represented an important movement away from Guesde's earlier position, embodied in the official POF programme. As time went on, Valette turned increasingly away from workers' issues, toward an even less marxist view of females as the 'reproducers' of society.[115]

The inclusion of Valette among the POF leadership in these last years of the century was unfortunate for the cause of organising textile ouvrières into the party. Her views excluded those evidenced by militant working women's strike demands, and allowed the male leadership

of the party to pass women over by shunting them into 'women's groups' and supporting their 'mothers' campaigns'. And this was the person whom Guesde declared to be "the only woman who really understood marxism". 116 It was therefore Valette whom the ouvrières of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing saw as the public representative of women in the highest ranks of the POF.

During 1895, both Valette and leaders of local socialist women's groups continued to militate among the textile workforce of Lille, Roubaix and Tourdoing, as well as elsewhere. During a strike in the textile industry of Roanne, Jules Guesde helped organise a local socialist women's group. He wrote enthusiastically to the Nord women, "Femmes de Roubaix, de Lille, de Calais, qui avez si vaillamment milité pour le parti ouvrier, vous avez, dans vos soeurs de Roanne, des compagnes dignés de vous". 117 At the party's national congress at Romilly in the autumn of that year, Valette presented 'the woman question' to the assembly - though with her usual confusion between socialism and her brand of feminism. 118 (In fact, she argued that women's organisation into socialist syndicats was a necessary but temporary expedient until the revolution would send them back to their 'natural' place in the home.) 119

After 1895, however, a silence fell at the local level, though the question of women's right continued to be debated at the national and international levels. 120

To outside observers, at least, the separate efforts of socialist women's groups went unnoticed. In fact, Clara Zetkin's opinion (offered to a reporter at the 1896 London meeting of the Second International) was that there was "no socialist women's movement in France". Why? Because in all the various French socialist parties, men and women worked side by side demanding the complete enfranchisement of both sexes. Further, there were no 'interesting' women connected with the movement, except Louise Michel, Paule Mink (a 'blanquiste' in Zetkin's words) and Valette.[121]

However sanguine Zetkin was, the reality was less so. Women's issues - and women's groups - were lost in the turn-of-the-century struggle among socialist parties for dominance.[122]

At the 1897 national congress of the POF (in Paris) there were five female delegates, including Paule Mink, Aline Valette, and Elisabeth Renaud.[123] This was Renaud's debut among the Guesdists, but her interest in them was short-lived. When two years later she founded the first national socialist-feminist group, the Groupe féministe socialiste, she led it into the independent socialist movement, not into the POF.[124] It was not unlikely that both she and Mink found the part's official resolution on the woman question confusing at best. And indeed it was so. It read:

> Les aptitudes et les charges sexuelles de la femme et les intérets superieurs de l'espèce et de la société attaches à sa sauvegarde, lui créant vis-à-vis des conditions actuelles de la production et de la reproduction une situation distincte de celle de l'homme, le Parti met à l'ordre du jour du prochain congrès et de sa propagande écrite ou parlée, la question de savoir s'il y a lieu d'élaborer un programme féminin, purement protecteur de la femme exploitée comme salariée et comme femme dépossedée comme salariée du fruit de son travail et forcée de se vendre dans son travail et dans son sexe, dépossedée comme mère du produit de sa chair si elle est mariée, écrasée sous toutes les charges de la maternité en dehors du mariage, doublement serve comme productrive et comme reproductrive. 125

Those feminists who hoped that this slightly convoluted posing of the question would lead to the debate prescribed (in'written and spoken propaganda') were soon disappointed, however. The resolution met stony silence in the years after 1897.

There were good reasons for this neglect. First, many Guesdists believed that the revolution was imminent, and that it would automatically bring with it the liberation of all human beings, including women. Thus no special theories or tactics were necessary to confront the quotidien problems of women's exploitation, outlined in the resolution. This conviction, ironically, soon vanished, when Jules Guesde, Jean Jaurès, and other socialist deputies were defeated in legislative elections in 1898. In the crisis atmosphere which ensued, women's issues disappeared. Much more critical was the cure for the socialists' disunity, which most believed was

responsible for the electorate's discontent.[126] For socialist women in the Nord, and elsewhere, the defeat overwhelmed their small movement. And the issue was further, and fatally, complicated by the struggle for dominance which accompanied efforts at unity. Women's emancipation became identified with independent socialists (who included men with tied to the left-wing of the bourgeois feminist movement);[127] who favoured a reformist path to political change. Anxious to distinguish themselves from reformism, and to portray themselves as France's true revolutionary party, the Guesdists turned away from the problem of reforming women's unique conditions.

Not until national unity was achieved - in 1905 - did the issue of women and socialism re-emerge. Between 1898 and that year, the Guesdists effectively ignored ouvrières; not surprisingly, the small local women's groups of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing, vanished.

Three key factors help explain the rather sudden disappearance of local women's groups from the socialist scene.[128] Firstly, the local Guesdist organisation, one of the most cohesive in France, was naturally pre-occupied with the national struggle to unify. Secondly, the success of the women's groups in winning their reforms - for scholars' cantines and creches - dispersed much of

the groups' energy - a consequence not unusual to single issue campaign organisations. A possible alternative raison d'être - the increasing misery of thousands of un- or underemployed ouvrières - had been lost to these groups earlier on.[129] Too, the socialist municipal governments in Lille and Roubaix usurped the women's groups' potential new issues. By 1897, both municipalities offered extensive social services.[130] Thirdly, the reformist nature of the Comités des femmes had prevented attempts to educate and politicize ouvrières so that they might have been integrated into the Guesdists' turn-of-the-century drive to attain mastery over a revolutionary French socialist movement. Thus the Comités' leaders had lost their natural constituency of ouvrières on two fronts: the economic, and the political.[131]

These generalisations held true for Lille and Roubaix, but the case was slightly different in Tourcoing. What socialist women's groups there were in Tourcoing in the 90s were small and ineffectual.[132] Reforms were initiated not by socialists, but by a cohesive, deeply religious patronat. There was probably no 'missed opportunity' for socialist women's groups among Tourcoing textile workers in this period; the patronat's policy of keeping wages relatively higher than in neighbouring cities, and of settling disputes quickly, defused rebellion.

After the disappearance of special women's groups, the local POF continued to touch the lives of ouvrières; by the late 90s, every area of workers' social lives had been penetrated by the Lille and Roubaix parties. Thus as family members, the female textile workers enjoyed socialist family fêtes (weekly events, according to local papers), song fests, theatricals, banquets, picnics, parades, puppet shows, 'bals aux sabots', and so on.[133] By the end of the century, Lille area Guesdists had succeeded in producing in microcosm the 'society within a society' of the giant German SPD.[134] Even the most private moments in workers' family lives - sickness, childbirth - felt the hand of Lille and Roubaix socialists, when municipal officials brought medical help, money, drugs, maternity care and even free layettes.

Socialism was, therefore, a fact of daily life in at least two of the cities under discussion. Because many Tourcoing socialists joined their neighbours in Lille and Roubaix for the larger public events, and even sponsored some meetings and parties at home, they, too, felt the hand of the party.

The importance of this penetration into workers' lives, in an area where community life had always flourished, cannot be underestimated. And the characteristic of most of these social activities was their focus

on the family. Men, women and children socialised together, just as they worked together in the mills and lived tightly packed together in the courées.

Thus separate women's groups were essentially foreign to the Flemish way of life. Their disappearance, therefore, was probably less surprising than their existence in the first place. Nevertheless as the social activities of the POF grew increasingly extraneous to its political campaign, the absence of women's groups allowed non-voting ouvrières to sink away from the day-to-day attentions of local leaders.

Meanwhile, during the months when local working women's groups vanished from the Flemish landscape, a new group was in embryo in Paris, which was to provoke a theoretical and administrative showdown with the newly-unified SFIO. This was the Groupe féministe-socialiste of Elisabeth Renaud and Louise Saumonau, which was founded in 1899.[135]

This group, which had no traceable influence on the policies of the Nord Guesdists, will not be treated in detail here. What was of interest, however, to the history of socialist-feminism in France was this group's continual problem with bourgeois feminism, which itself provided key pressure on the organised French left.

Initially, as the group's choice of name suggests, the organisers straddled the two movements, choosing to

follow Auclert's line, that all women were the 'natural allies' of the proletariat.[136] But the balance was always tenuous, and at the 1900 national feminist congress, it broke.

The Congrès des droits des femmes was organised by Marguerite Durand's bougeois feminist group, La Fronde.[137] All French feminists were invited, and the GFS sent a delegation led by Renaud. At first there was unity: a resolution was easily passed in favour of a minimum wage and specified periods of rest for female workers. The socialists, however, proposed that domestic servants - among the most abused of French working women - be included in the wording. There followed a bitter exchange between Renaud and one Mme Wiggishoff:[138]

Wiggishoff: It seems to me that this is not a practical way to protect maids. You ask a complete day of rest. But these little girls of 15 or 16, where would they go? Where would they take their meals?

Renaud: With you.

Wiggishoff: What? I would have to prepare lunch for my maid? I am not a saint, and it is very likely that her lunch would not get made. That is not practical.

Many of the meeting's organisers hastened to try to repair the breach created by these words, but the working women resented their patronage. Renaud finally told them that she, "who had worked for others and had received humiliations", was better able to speak for working women than they;[139] in pursuit of that realisation,

the GFS ceased contact.

This break forced socialist women to choose, finally, between loyalty to a class and loyalty to a sex. Renaud and Paule Mink chose the former, while Hubertine Auclert and Léonie Rouzade remained feminists, (though both called themselves 'socialists')[140].

Although these events suggested a clear-cut break between the two movements, that was an illusion. The problem continued to vex theorists, even while organising for the class struggle grew more pressing. Why? Because it was a problem without a real solution. On the theoretical plane, female industrial workers had to be included in any marxist theory of proletarian struggle. But if they were, what about their extra-factory role? What about their exploitation by proletarian men? If personal relations developed out of economic ones, why was it that women were commonly oppressed everywhere and in all economic and social systems?

The problems were not limited to the theoretical, either. Practically speaking, women were less organised than men, and male hostility to them was a large part of the cause. Furthermore, they had double workshifts - one of them unpaid - which limited their participation in educational and organisational activities. Further, they were less educated and less well paid than male proletarians: this meant they could rarely afford

membership costs or newspaper subscriptions, the former that they were less accessible to printed propaganda materials.

In the early years, the Guesdists had taken these problems seriously, both in theory and practice.

Where did they now stand, during these years of uncertainty before unification?

The Guesdists and the Woman Question, 1900-1905

Between 1900 and 1905 the 'woman question' lived a spectral existence between the lines of police, prefectoral and party reports. The issue disappeared entirely from party congress agendas;[141] issues more critical to the survival of the organised Left overwhelmed peripheral matters of party policy towards various groups within its constituency. The tenuous unity, achieved between 1899 and 1902[142] was problematic from the start. The Millerand crisis of 1899 immediately destroyed whatever remnants of unity there were in the Nord federation, in spite of the POF's success in the 1900 municipal elections in Roubaix and Lille (with the Radical socialists in alliance on the second ballot) (Tourcoing elected an independent socialist). Quarrels between ministerialists, including Carette, the mayor of Roubaix, and anti-ministerialists,

including Guesde, Ghesquière and others, finally erupted into the open, with the socialist municipal council of Roubaix forcing Carette to resign over a tax dispute.[143]

In the 1902 bye-election that followed Carette's departure, Eugene Motte, of the textile family, was elected mayor, along with some other successful non-socialist candidates. Carette formed his own short-lived party, the 'Roubaix Socialist Labour Party'.[144] It was thus hardly surprising that in the legislative elections later that year, the PO in the area managed to elect only one <u>député</u> from the Lille arrondissement, Gustave Delory.

Then, in 1903, the Guesdists exacerbated the disaffection of its working class constituency by failing to support the 1903 Armentières textile strike, which had massive backing, not only among workers in that city, but also among textile workers in the mills of Lille, Roubaix, and Tourcoing.[145] Disunity was the order of the day; the independent socialists began to win increasing support throughout the department, though the Guesdists retained a shaky control of the Lille area. The Nord federation was in desperate need of a genuine socialist unity.

Female textile workers were active in these years, but not as an identifiable special interest group. In May of 1901 Mme Sorgue - a feminist socialist who made

frequent appearances in these years before unification - spoke at the Lille Chambre syndical de l'industrie textile's fête du Broquelet, and declared herself "happy to see so many women there".[146] Later that year, in November, she again addressed a meeting in Lille, along with Delory, though this one was in support of 'revolutionary unity'. Again she noted the presence of "numerous women, come to acclaim socialist unity". She added that their presence was a measure of socialist success, as it was essential to include women in the struggle for change. It was, moreover, important for women to teach their sons not to be 'cannon-fodder' and their daughters not to be prostitutes...[147]

Police reported "as many women as men" at a meeting of the Parti Ouvrier in Lille in that same year, at which a woman called Seraphine Pajot lectured on 'the death of God', a lecture she repeated many times in the area.[148] And when the party held a meeting in the spring of that year, Ghesquière addressed both men and women on the familiar subject of equal pay for equal work, something he claimed was one of the key issues facing the part in 1901.[149] Finally, the prefect's report on a fête to mark the opening of a new room in the POF's cooperative, l'Union de Lille, counted both 'ouvrières and ouvriers' among the 1500 people attending, most of them from the workers' quartier of Moulins-Lille.[150]

Paradoxically, the national congress of the POF, held in Roubaix in September 1901, made no mention of women at all. Audiences at meetings were addressed as 'citoyens'.[151] At one point Guesde stated that "we do not disdain universal suffrage but we know, and have always said, that all classes, in order to bring to an end their existence as classes, were condemned to the revolutionary act."[152] Since it was the case that the issue of male suffrage was a key one in the POB in these years (not all Belgian men were entitled to vote), Guesde may have been responding to a local issue. It seems more likely, however, that he was aware of pressure from women in the GFS to get all socialist parties to adopt women's suffrage on their programmes.

Thus the party's internal divisions did not exclude ouvrières from participating in traditional socialist activities and meetings, but they did cause the issue of working women to drop entirely out of sight - something that had not happened since the first workers' congresses twenty-five years before.

The national movement of socialist-feminists had little effect of Guesdism, as they hitched their wagon to the Independent Socialists in these first years of the twentieth century. At the socialist congress of 1902, held at Tours, it was at the behest of the Independent Socialists that the GFS was present, represented

by Elisabeth Renaud, Louise Saumoneau and Marie Bonnevial, among others.[153] The congress adopted a feminist programme which included, inter alia, women's suffrage, the admission of women into all public functions and the creation of a new family group, based on the recognition of all individuals' rights.[154] The journals of the non-Guesdist socialists were also full of speculation - doctrinal and practical - about the role of women in society, women's rights and so on.[155] Likewise, the GFS journal, La Femme Socialiste, printed numerous articles on women's rights, many of which detailed the SPD's position on women's issues, and the Belgian party's method of organising women workers.

According to La Femme Socialiste, the Parti ouvrier belge (POB) commenced an energetic drive to recruit and organise working women after its Liège congress in 1901. All regional federations in the Belgian party were instructed to create auxiliary women's groups, under an auxiliary umbrella (already in existence) called the Fédération nationale des femmes socialiste (led by Mme Vandevelde, the wife of the POB's leader). In addition, ouvrières were to be organised into existing party-linked syndicats in time for them to participate in the next national syndical congress.[156]

In August, 1901, the organised socialist women printed their manifesto. Its principles closely resembled those

of the original POF party programme, in which ouvrières and ouvriers were no longer to be distinguished by sex. "Une conscience, une voix!", the women proclaimed.[157]

Some of the socialists' promises to ouvrières also duplicated those of the POF. Women were promised protection against patronal exploitation, equality of wages, and insurance against illness, work accidents and old age. The party supported both free, obligatory education for children, and food cooperatives.

Two aspects of the Belgian women's programme were different, reflecting the differences in the two societies. The Belgians included an appeal to 'ménagères', with an anti-food tax plank and a plank demanding women's emancipation within the family. The constituency for this appeal was the large numbers of working class women who did not work outside the home, and whose husbands formed an important group within the party (e.g. miners' wives).

Second, the issue of suffrage was more crucial to the Belgians, where the right to vote was not universal among men. Thus a separate women's suffrage - keenly sought by French, German and Austrian feminists - had no appeal. If anything, it promised to provoke a serious split within the movement.[158] Therefore on this issue the Belgian women declared themselves firmly on the side of the class struggle over the feminist struggle.

In spite of this declaration of class loyalty, however, the Belgian women were more solidly feminist than the French in other ways. In addition to their position on liberating women in the family, they added the demand that "the doors of cooperatives, of councils, of administration, of study groups, mutual aid societies, libraries and meetings be opened" - by men - so that women's education could begin.[159]

The French editors of La Femme Socialiste - Louise Saumoneau and Elisabeth Renaud - singled out the Belgians' rejection of women's suffrage for applause. They ignored the strong feminism of of the platform, a gesture which reflected the French women's equivocal response to issues regarded as 'bourgeois' in France.

The SPD's women's movement also received press coverage during 1901 and 1902, not only from La Femme Socialiste but from other journals as well.[160] What impressed French observers about the Germans, however, was not the form of women's groups, or their doctrinal positions, but rather their phenomenal success.

By 1903, the German feminist movement, according to one French socialist, counted some 70,000 members.[161] (As the SPD's ties with this movement remained informal until 1908, it was not clear what proportion of this number indicated socialist women.) With its own journal, Gleichheit, edited by Clara Zetkin, and its ties with women throughout the country, the movement aroused

justifiable envy among frustrated French militants. In their amazement, however, French socialist observers overlooked a flaw in the German situation, one which duplicated that at home. That was, the theoretical and practical confusion between feminism, including bourgeois feminism, and socialism.[162]

The various press discussions of socialist women's movements outside France signalled no awakening of socialist-feminist consciousness among socialist tendances, however. Still, they served to keep the issue alive, through the messy, other-directed quarrels of the pre-unification period.

Thus, by the end of the eighties, the Guesdists of the Parti Ouvrier both held a strong position in favour of women's emancipation - dependent on their economic position as workers rather than their biological status as women - and acted on it publicly. The outlines of the position were straightforward: women had the right to experience their equality with men; women were presently unequal vis-à-vis men, both at home and at work; work could bring women economic independence from men and was thus the only means for the attainment of women's liberation.

Still, an equivocal note lurked in much of the writing on the question, as we have seen in the differences between the positions of Guesde and Lafrague, for example. Working women were seen both as an integral

part of the proletariat and as a thing distinct - a concept, an object to be freed by the actions of the male proletariat on its route to freedom. The words of the worker-poet Eugene Pottier (author of the Internationale), written at the end of the eighties, reflect this strange admixture of integration and separation:

> En avant! les forges les mines, les fabriques et les chantiers
> Compagnons de tous les métiers
> Martyrs de toutes les famines
> Forçats que la misère vend.
> A la bourgeoisie usurière.
> En avant! la classe ouvrière
> La classe ouvrière en avant!
> Venez l'enfant; venez la femme;
> Pâles meurtris des greniers froids
> La douleur affirme ses droits
> Les sanglots ont fait leur programme
> Il faut à tout être vivant
> Sol, outils, matière première...[163]

Were women, then 'compagnons, martyrs, forçats', or were they separate and, like the children, the 'pâles meurtris'? It was a dilemma that demanded a solution, but none was to be forthcoming in this early period of optimism and revolutionary expectation.

The 1890s opened with a surge of organisational activity in the Lille area, consequent upon the PO's decision to continue standing for elections. The Party's position at this time was that the electoral struggle could never effect a revolutionary change, but

was an effective means of developing consciousness and coherence in the working class.

However logical this position, it posed a serious problem for a revolutionary political party commited to grounding its practice in marxist theory. The problem was this: if the party succeeded in electing its candidates then these candidates would, by definition, have to collaborate with a republican government. Furthermore, anyone successful in municipal elections wourld raise local hopes while remaining, in the long run, powerless to do more than institute relatively minor local reforms. They certainly could not substantively alter existing social and economic relations.[164]

Thus local party debates in these years were understandably muddled. While the leadership worried itself with the theoretical consequences of the party's local practices, the constituency, not unnaturally, developed growing expectations of the positive consequences of electoral success. Moreover, some candidates were found to compromise the principles of the Party in their effort to win support. The local candidates were caught between a rock and a hard place: they sought support on the grounds that socialists ought to elect socialists into office, but at the same time they were bound to acknowledge that none of the Guesdists' essential platform promises could be fulfilled.

The POF's pronouncements on working women

demonstrated this muddle in both theory and practice. Where earlier on, in the late seventies and throughout the eighties, the new party enjoyed the luxury of doctrinal purity, it now found itself faced with the daily practical exigencies of electoral politics. Constituents had to be pacified, new recruits organised and attacks for rival movements met and parried. Not surprisingly, the Guesdists' revolutionary position on the liberation of women dissolved during the nineties in a flurry of compromises.

CHAPTER 11

FEMINISM AND THE SFIO

When the socialists finally unified, in 1905, the dispute for the leadership lay between Jules Guesde and Jean Jaurès. But Guesde was almost 60, while Jaurès was still a young man of 45.[1] What is more, Guesde's health was frail and would remain so for several years, effectively preventing him from the role he might otherwise have played in steering the course of the new socialist party. One cannot know in retrospect whether his view of women's emancipation would have dominated what was a very loose federation of a variety of tendances and groups. No more can one know whether he might have steered the SFIO into a different kind of party altogether, one of a more revolutionary, less reformist character.[2] Jaurès's socialism, however, while Lefranc calls 'open socialism',[3] was the socialism of intellectuals as much as of workers, while Guesde's 'closed' variety had its power base within important segments of the industrial working class (such as in the Lille arrondissement) and among peasants (as in the Var)[4]. Further, Jaurès thought ideas of imminent revolution utopian at best, while Guesde clung to his conviction that the overthrow of capitalism would come soon and would come by insurrection rather than election.[5]

At the national level, it was Jaurès's socialism that came to dominate the newly-formed Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO) between 1905 and 1914. In the Nord, however, the Guesdists retained their influence, though unification brought little peace. Instead, local Guesdist leaders found themselves engaged in a bitter struggle with anti-political syndicalists, led by Merrheim of the metallurgists union. This struggle grew graver after the 1906 Amiens congress, [6] absorbed the time of local leaders and sapped what little energy was left after the shattering defection of Carette and his followers in 1902.

This Guesdist struggle within the local CGT for the loyalty of the Nord workers brought to the fore one of the four strands which together comprised the background to the socialists' approach to the 'woman question' in the years 1905-1914; when, in 1906, the CGT launched a campaign to organise women workers, the socialists were forced to re-examine their own efforts, which had lapsed so badly since 1900.

Two of the other strands affecting the SFIO's approach to women's emancipation probably concerned intellectuals in the party rather than the Guesdists' local constituency. These were the activities of the Groupe Féministe Socialiste, and the presence of the bourgeois feminist movement. Leaders of both groups continued in these years to move back and forth between

strictly bourgeois women's groups and the socialist party. Some chose to identify positively with a particular socialist tendance (e.g. Madeleine Pelletier, who was a Guesdist); others showed no particular preference. In any case, the activities of these women had some effect on the SFIO's theorising about women's conditions, although little real action ever followed on the various abstract pronouncements.

The final strand was that of international socialist feminism - or primary importance to women in such strong and relatively unified parties as existed in Germany, Austria and Italy.[7] So influential was Clara Zetkin's German women's movement that she succeeded in founding an International Congress of Socialist Women (ICSW) in 1907. Unfortunately, the ICSW met only three times before the war, hardly enough to organise an international movement of any strength, or develop a coherent theoretical position. Nevertheless, the doctrinal pronouncements of these groups were debated in France and sometimes even provoked responses from the Lille area. Moreover, the effect of the ICSW was felt in France in a practical way, when Louise Saumoneau founded the Groupe des Femmes Socialistes in 1913.[8] This group might have enjoyed some success had it had time to grow and to organise before war broke out. As it was, only one short reference to its organisation in Lille survives as an enticing suggestion of its possible extent.[9]

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Taken together, pressure from the CGT, a nationally organised socialist feminism, middle-class feminism and an international movement comprised the four elements in contemporary socialist feminist thinking and action which would influence the new SFIO. I have somewhat artificially disentangled them into their constituent parts for the purpose of analysis, but it should be remembered that they interacted constantly; it is only taken together that they provoked the SFIO's own development of a doctrine addressed to the question of women's emancipation. Sadly, as the following sections illustrate, this doctrine was in reality the old issue in new clothes - and, furthermore, considerably less revolutionary, as well as less 'marxist', than its predecessor.

The CGT and Socialist-Feminism

During the struggle between the CGT and the SFIO, particularly acute in the Lille area, the socialists found themselves on the defensive, trying to define their positions on workers' issues in such a way as to distinguish themselves from the syndicalists. Furthermore, an election-oriented SFIO sought popular issues, and doctrines amenable to its constituency. Because the socialists' practice was ostensibly grounded in a

relatively inflexible theory, these two tacts were not always easy. Much convoluted explanation accompanied public positions - and the SFIO suffered by comparison with the ideologically flexible CGT.

Concerning the relation of female workers to the SFIO, the actions of the CGT after 1906 were particularly threatening. Ironically, the syndicalists usurped the one clearly marxist line: that promulgated by Guesde in the late seventies. That is, the appealed directly to ouvrières as workers, and treated various ancillary problems of organisation and education as secondary matters of little theoretical dimension. The CGT's assumption of this position left the socialist field open to a profoundly un-marxist view of female workers (though not of course acknowledged as such). In practice, this meant a congerie of SFIO actions effectively excluding women from the party.

Between 1905 and 1914 the CGT threw its support behind both separate women's unions and women's groups per se, within the loose umbrella of the Confédération.[10] It did this because of its recognition of the existence of a male hostility which often discouraged women from joining predominantly male unions,[11] rather than from any ideological premise regarding the non-sex-specific 'consciousness' of the proletariat.

The CGT also never assumed that ouvrières on strike

or organising syndicats were more concerned with 'women's issues' than with strictly work-related ones.[12] However patronising their tone, CGT observers accurately reported women's strikes and their demands. When the syndicalists did campaign for creches and child care facilities during school holidays, they did so on behalf of parents, not of mothers only.[13]

The CGT recognised the crucial importance of training women militants to propagandise and organise. Many such militantes received wide coverage in the CGT press during these pre-war years.

Finally the CGT's official position was that women had the right to work and to equal pay. Even after the Couriau affair split the movement in 1913, the two official journals stood firm on this issue (though admittedly it was often reasoned that equal pay would eliminate female competition in many occupations).[14]

On virtually every issue, the SFIO took an opposite position. Thus it specifically forbade separate women's groups within its organisation.[15] It consistently debated the differences between men and women. It supported - though sometimes equivocally - a world view in which working class women stayed home.[16]

Thus the struggle between the two halves of the French Left - the economic and the political - led to the SFIO's adoption of a position vis-à-vis working

women that was theoretically and practically untenable. When one considers that women compromised a considerable segment of the waged workforce in France,[17] the SFIO's failure to treat them as workers had serious consequences.

Among textile workers in the Lille area, however, the struggle had less direct impact on the issue of women than it did on the credibility of the socialist movement as a whole. The metallurgical industry where the CGT was strong employed few women in this period.[18] For unorganised textile workers of both sexes, therefore, the constant internecine and probably incomprehensible quarrels among competing union leaders claiming to represent different interests produced only a general indifference.[19]

The national, Paris-based Groupe Féministe Socialiste also had small impact on textile ouvrières in the Nord, except in so far as the SFIO's reaction to it dictated party policy toward organising women. And that reaction was, in the long run, negative. Although the independent socialists had supported the group in the years before unification, they dropped it after 1905.[20] This happened in part because a unified socialist party had no use for the variety of small autonomous movements which had supported various tendances before. But the SFIO's

official rejection of the GFS also reflected the leadership's hostility to an autonomous women's group, whose campaigns (e.g. for equal wages, or for the liberation of women from male domination) posed a threat to socialist unity. Thus while the SFIO claimed to forbid all groups except the party's local and regional organisations, it allowed the young Socialists their status as a separate, autonomous group within the SFIO.[21]

This rejection broke the GFS. Its leaders either retired from the political scene or joined bourgeois feminist activities.[22]

'Bourgeois Feminism'

Overlapping the pressure brought by the GFS on the new SFIO was that wielded by the better organised and financed bourgeois feminists, whose arguments and activities clashed repeatedly with those of both the CGT and the SFIO.

There was constant interaction between socialists and feminists, beginning, as we have seen, in the 1870s.[23] Both groups became better organised in the ensuing years, and feminist pressure on the socialists thereby increased. The fact that many feminist goals elicited the support of some, but not all, SFIO militants meant 'the woman

question' was a constant source of friction within that party. Too, feminists (like syndicalists) were not burdened with a rigid and often unwieldy theory. Thus they could state goals and pursue them without provoking internal disputes over the theoretical legitimacy of their goals.[24]

Those feminist aims that overlapped socialist principles included:

> Women's right to work, at equal pay;
>
> Access to all civil rights enjoyed by male citizens, including custody of children, ownership and control of wages and property, the right to sign and witness contracts, and to sit on juries;
>
> The reform of welfare systems to increase crèches, children's hospices, medical and maternity care, and so on.[25]

With many of these the SFIO was in clear agreement. But the issue of civil rights - especially the right to vote, which directly affected the socialist party - provoked constant argument. Furthermore, as the gap between socialist feminists and the SFIO widened over the degree to which the socialists would support demands for women's suffrage, the party found itself again reacting negatively, choosing positions that distinguished it from bourgeois feminism, and presenting those positions in stern ideological dress inorder to discourage

the adherence of 'troublesome' elements.[26]

The vexed question of women's vote exemplified this problem. The socialists' first problem with this demand was theoretical: while Marx had argued the necessity of a bourgeois revolution to precede the socialist one, that process in the French case[27] had not included women. In fact, many women had fewer legal rights after the imposition of the Code Napoléon than before.[28] However, as the extension of certain democratic rights to the population was a pre-condition that had been met for men, and, as the socialist revolution was believed to be very near,[29] a 'bourgeois revolution' for women was thought to be irrelevant. Further, it would delay the more critical movement toward socialism, which, it was argued, would 'liberate' everyone, male or female.

The theoretical spanner in the works was Marx's dictum that required the proletariat to liberate itself. This eventuality required that revolutionary class come to consciousness and organise itself. Jules Guesde had recognised this necessity - and thus had deliberately argued for the education and organisation of female proletarians along with males. The SFIO, however, refused to engage this problem, after years of experience which taught it that hostility between the sexes - highlighted by such efforts - was not easily overcome. Socialist feminists were thus left to struggle on apart, and were often at loggerheads with the male SFIO leadership.

Suffrage also posed serious practical problems. Many socialists feared that enfranchised women would vote for the Church. However specious this argument, it carried weight because it was grounded in widely-held beliefs about the particularly 'spiritual' nature of women.[30] Second, the socialists eared - with justification - that a struggle for women's suffrage would seriously weaken a movement that was already wounded by other battles. They compromised by supporting working women's campaigns for voting rights in the Conseils des Prud'hommes elections (a right won in 1908, along with the right to sit on such councils), and for the right to elect work inspectors (a right demanded on behalf of both sexes).

In the end, the SFIO chose to support women's suffrage on principle, while doing almost nothing to support it in practice. Favourable articles began to appear in L'Humanité in 1907,[31] but the positive stand was qualified by arguments that the class struggle and economic demands must take precedence.[32] Not until 1912 did Jaurès speak in the Chambre in favour of women's suffrage.[33] His action was largely the result of the International's campaign for women's rights, which had begun several years before.[34] French socialists' general inaction on the issue has thus led more than one historian to conclude that the SFIO was in de facto opposition to the demand.[35]

Feminism in the Second International

Pressure on the SFIO regarding women's rights came from two main sources: the SPD itself (led by the feminism of Zetkin, August Bebel and Karl Liebknecht), and the International's Congress of Socialist Women (founded in 1907).

The history of the International's relationship to women workers as a particular group with special needs began in 1904, when the Austrian 'Frauen-Reichs' committee attempted to have the issue of women's suffrage discussed at the 1904 congress held in Amsterdam that year.[36] The Austrian women, led by Frau Schlesinger-Eckstein, argued that discussion of the issue was crucial for socialism. Nevertheless, hostility from other socialist parties convinced them to withdraw the item; the issue appeared in the congress only under the traditional categories of protective legislation ("la prohibition du travail des femmes dans les industries qui peuvent porter atteinte à leur santé et à leur moralité"),[37] of social welfare legislation (e.g., insurance for maternity and pregnancy)[38] and the problem of a resurgence of clerical influence ("cette action de la part du cléricalisme est dictée par le désir d'étouffer dans l'esprit de la jeunesse prolétarienne le germe de la pensée émancipatrice").[39]

Because of the concurrent meeting of the newly-formed ICSW, the meeting of the International in 1907 at Stuttgart saw many more female delegates than usual. Among the 66 women present, seven were from France (surprising considering the rejection of the GFS the year before). This number compared favourably with, e.g., the nine German women. (England and Austria sent 23 and 11, respectively). The women comprised only an insignificant 7½% of the total (884), although the French women comprised close to 10% of their delegation's total.[40] However, of those countries partly represented by female delegates, only Finland, Bohemia, Switzerland, Poland and France were represented by non-affiliated women: i.e., women who represented no women's groups. All the other leading member countries boasted strong, and growing women's organisations.

The debate on women's suffrage, postponed as too-divisive in 1904, was fifth on the agenda. It was debated following the ICSW's adoption of a strong resolution supporting it.[41] The main concern of the delegates was, however, not to launch a campaign for the goal, but instead to use the debate to distinguish socialists' support of women's rights from that of bourgeois feminists. Clara Zetkin, the women's leading spokesperson, argued a familiar line: women's suffrage must never occur separate from universal suffrage (at least where that was

possible, e.g., in Belgium). Moreover, socialist women recognised that the vote was merely a small step in the struggle to overthrow capitalism; this latter struggle must always take precedence.[42] The vote had only two uses: it could "breach the solid fortress of ignorance engendered by the backward conditions of the majority of proletarian women",[43] and could help women produce the next generation of socialist 'avengers'.[44] The Austrian, Adelaide Popp, took a similar line.[45]

A more openly feminist view was offered by a minority voice - that of Dr. Madeleine Pelletier, who called herself a Guesdist. She declared herself interested in only one thing: women's right to exist free and independent of men. Women who had hitherto existed only through men were "tired of that tutellage, and wanted equal rights".[46]

The reasons for Pelletier's differences with the Austrian and German women were three-fold. First, the French socialist women's movement had long crossed class lines. The clarity of the SPD's organisational structure had eluded the French movement. Secondly, more working class women worked for wages throughout their adult lives in France than was the case in Germany or Austria. Their roles as mothers were thus compromised by the facts of their working lives, which were, as we have seen, grim. Pelletier recognised that a campaign

aimed at wives and mothers was not likely to win many recruits among ouvrières.[47] Finally, Guesdism was not yet dead in France, and that group's unqualified recognition of women as proletarians still attracted articulate socialist-feminists like Pelletier.

None of these disputes surfaced in the resolution ultimately adopted. Instead, the International declared itself firmly behind women's suffrage, and promised a struggle waged by all socialist parties and by members of both sexes.[48]

The promise was little more than that, however. When the international met in Copenhage, in 1910 (with the ICSW meeting nearby) women's issues had dropped from the agenda, although 12 of the 23 countries represented sent female delegates (including two from France).[49] Although two banners, reading 'Suffrage universel pour tous', and 'Donnez à la femme les mêmes droits qu'à l'homme', decorated the hall, no mention was made of their message during the meetings.[50] The SFIO did raise the issue of women working - in Proudhonist terms. However, both the Swedes and the Swiss protested this mistaken view of women "dragged from their natural place by capitalism",[51] and the issue was dropped.

The ICSW's own Copenhagen congress produced resolutions whose tone differed little from that expressed in 1906. On the whole, these socialist women seemed

bent on making themselves acceptable to the International - by disavowing bourgeois feminism and resolving to educate proletarian women to support those issues the International declared essential (e.g. pacifism). Indeed, when they did engage 'women's issues' they did so in terms anti-thetical to the interests of French proletarian women. One resolution, for example, demanded an end to all work and all work methods bad for women's health.[52] The effects of the legislation they prescribed would, obviously, have been dire for ouvrières.[53] The Guesdists' long-held position, that all protective work legislation should apply equally to men and women, was clearly more appealing, and more suitable where a sexual division of industrial labour was less clear-cut than elsewhere.[54]

The most problematic of the ICSW's resolutions was one that demanded that the State provide obligatory education to teach women "their duties as mothers". These motherhood classes were to be accompanied by brochures informing women about the proper conditions for giving birth and the importance of breast-feeding. It presents no great obstacles to the imagination to consider the unpopularity of such State measures had they been put to the test among textile ouvrières in Lille, Roubaix, and Tourcoing![55]

Given these ICSW positions, it was not surprising that

when the SFIO began to consider the problem of organising proletarian women they adopted the domestic context as the one toward which they aimed. The more so since those with residual Proudhonist views found such an orientation amenable and unthreatening.

These four elements were thus crucial in the SFIO's development of a policy toward women between 1905 and 1914. Each brought formative pressure to bear on French socialist militants, whose thinking shaped 'socialist-feminism' in what became the second phase in the history of relations between the left's female constituency and its political party.

These four external strands interacted with the SFIO's historical circumstances vis-à-vis female workers during the years leading up to 1914. These circumstances included two important positive factors, one a corollary of the other. Firstly, the SFIO was the only political party in France that admitted women as members;[56] and thus debates about the nature of socialist-feminism took place within the party and were less-easily marginalised than those which occurred among non-party women, e.g. of bourgeois feminist pressure groups.[57] In addition, the SFIO discovered anew economic and organisational initiatives of female workers themselves, although the discovery waxed and waned.

Cries of surprise and pleasure at, e.g., a female strike, were followed in the socialist press by silence, then by a fresh spate of enthusiastic reports of another strike.

Between 1905 and 1913, the SFIO's reactions to 'the woman question' were found mainly in the upper levels of the party, particularly among the Parisian intellectuals who dominated the party leadership at the center. Thus what to readers of the press first appeared to have been a flurry of positive activities by the SFIO was in reality evidence of a growing gap between the party of the Rench working class and half its constituency.

This division can be seen through two lenses: through the formal lens of party congresses and reports in the SFIO's journal, L'Humanité, and through the more informal, unofficial socialist journals, including Le Mouvement socialiste, La Revue socialiste, and La Femme Socialiste.

The Formal Lens

The peripherality of the woman question to the SFIO's real preoccupations in the first year of unification was illustrated by its absence from the first party congress, at Chalon-sur-Sâine, in 1905.[58] Very quickly, however, external pressures forced the party to

confront the difficult problem of women's suffrage. At the 1906 congress, the lines of those for and against were clearly drawn. The Guesdists, represented by Madeleine Pelletier,[59] led the arguments in favour. Her arguments countered, one by one, those commonly proposed by the 'antis'.[60]

If, Pelletier began, there was no god, as socialists agree there was not, then what agency assigned women an inferior social place? If this resulted from her biological role as reproducer, why? How could it be argued that biology had decreed that women should also "make soup and clean shoes", with "no wider horizon than that of the kitchen and bedroom"?[61]

Thirdly, she argued that women's reputation as clericalists was nonsense. The churches were too small and too few to hold all the women reputed to be "rushing to church". "En majorité", she concluded, les femmes sont indifférentes en matière de religion".[62]

Finally, she added, working women were offering evidence of their potential in economic activities; the socialists needed to include them in the political struggle, by actively campaigning for women's suffrage.[63]

Not surprisingly, it was Pelletier's argument that women were not more religious than men that provoked disagreement. A delegate from the Vosges argued that provincial women were extremely religious.[64] His

argument was countered by M. Boyer, representing Brittany, "a very religious area". Women, he argued, went to mass because they had no other places to go and the church welcomed them.[65] If given the vote, however, they would vote socialist for two reasons: socialists were anti-alcoholism and stood for the future liberation of children.[66] Gustave Delory, from the Nord federation, added the traditional Guesdist argument: that the vote was a means to educate, and therefore women could not change their views without it. Too, society had not demanded that men 'earn' the right to vote, and this should not be required of women.[67] A final speech, by a delegate from the Aube, added the International's long-standing prescription that distinctions by sex were forbidden.[68]

The Congress then voted a resolution in favour of women's suffrage; only six delegates voted against.

The issue then died away.[69] In 1909, Pelletier's speech in favour of women's rights provoked the delegates at St. Etienne into 'laughter'.[70] One M. Coreos voiced the general sentiments: "...does citoyenne Pelletier ...want to contaminate the prettiest half of humanity?" He was greeted with "laughter and applause".[71]

After that year, no more mention was made of women's <u>rights</u> at the national level.[72] The SFIO's view of their marginal, and inferior role, however, found

voice during the 1911 campaign for the 'semaine anglaise', when socialist propaganda promised women that free Saturday afternoons for workers would give them time to do all their household tasks.[73] (Male workers, on the other hand, were promised a day and a half of leisure.)

The socialist organisation closest to our protagonists, the Fédération nationale ouvrière textile, mirrored the party's indifference to the woman question. Between 1905 and 1914, that syndicat showed no concern with organising women workers. A few women attended congresses as delegates - though none from the Nord - and approval of a few women's strikes was offered from time to time.[74] But there was little public interest in the rights of some 400,000 'women and children' in the industry who were still unorganised in 1911.[75]

Turning next to the official socialist press, it was clear that what amounted to the official neglect of female workers by the SFIO and its textile union was not replicated in the party's journal, L'Humanité. Instead that paper mirrored the effects of external pressure - from the International, the bourgeois feminists, the CGT, and socialist women (who re-surfaced as a group in 1913). Among the issues discussed were the failure of the French party to duplicate the SPD's success with women, the pros and cons of women's suffrage, women's strikes, and the

best methods for recruiting prolétariennes for the socialist cause.

French socialists' failure to attract women was thrown into stark relief by the visibility of German and Austrian women, who organised the ICSW in 1906. L'Humanité printed a lengthy article in February, 1907, that attempted to delineate the causes of the French failure.[76] The writer, Louise Chaboseau-Napius,[77] made four points. First, she stated that French women had not gone to socialism because socialism had not gone to them. Further, French socialist leaders had failed to recognise that women were two times proletarians - in factories and in homes (as 'wives, mothers, sisters'). Separate women's organisations, on the German model, were needed to confront this problem. Thirdly, the French party was riddled with dissension. The German women's groups showed that all tendances must receive equal treatment, in order to achieve success with women.

There was nothing new in Chaboseau-Napius's argument of course. But it was remarkable that the author seemed unaware both of the relative antiquity of her 'double proletarian' argument, and of the SFIO's official negative proscription of her proffered solution of separate socialist women's groups.[78]

The problem of women's indifference to the SFIO

continued to exercise party militants in ensuing months, particularly when evidence concerning women outside the SFIO was presented to their attention. Thus, for example, when the English suffragettes visited Paris in 1907, Jean Longuet [79] attempted to discover the causes for their success when in the France of his day, "female workers were very indifferent to all protest movements". He interviewed one of the Englishwomen, selected for her working class credentials ('finisseuses' from Canningtown in London's East End). When he put his question to this 'citoyenne Knight', she replied that French working women were much worse off than their English counterparts, and unable to turn their attention beyond the daily struggle for existence. [80]

In spite of the obvious truth of Knight's explanation, Longuet was only partly convinced. He argued that French working women were 'unconscious', and thus not ready to join a struggle for suffrage, lest they mistakenly put the struggles of the sex before the struggles of the proletariat.

This skewing of the issue was not only a result of fears engendered by the English suffragettes' successes in recruiting women from different classes; at home, too, the feminists were active among ouvrières. Not only was Marguerite Durand's movement growing, but the CGT founded its Comité d'action féministe syndicaliste in that year. [81] Thus socialists found themselves

caught among pressure groups - the ICSW, the non-socialist feminists, and the syndicalist feminists.

The dilemma remained unresolved through 1908. L'Humanité continued to report women's strikes, and to discuss, in vague terms, the eventuality of a 'new' socialist women's movement. And on one issue they took a clear stand: women's right to stand and to vote for Conseils des Prud'hommes.[82] After that right was granted in November, 1908, L'Humanité was unequivocal in its enthusiasm. In so far as Conseils' representation was clearly a working class issue, not compromised by support from bourgeois feminists, it offered the paper's editors virtually the only opportunity in that year to proffer unequivocal support.

The socialists' continuing failure to attract ouvrières grew increasingly obvious - enough so that in 1910 Longuet dropped his concerns about the dilution of the class struggle in order to accept the ICSN's imperative that women must be organised separate from men. "The French ouvrière's lot is the worst in Europe", he wrote; "her pay is the lowest, her work the unhealthiest". Worse, the SFIO leaders had failed in their duty to working women. "Admirable female militants"[83] had worked for thirty years, but to no avail. The solution? The SFIO must build cadres among the women themselves.[84]

Unfortunatley, Longuet's prescription was ignored

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until 1912 when a 'woman's issue' provoked the party's leaders to include ouvrières in their thinking. The issue was war. As stereotypes had long supported the view that women were 'natural' pacifists, the SPIO had little difficulty believing that they were readily available to join the socialist struggle against war.

This was, in fact, the issue that elicited one of the first public statements on women from Jean Jaurès. In L'Humanité, in December 1912, he argued that women had a key role in the chief crisit facing socialists, i.e. the coming of war. Moreover, he thought male socialists ought to join the struggle because of what war would do to "millions de pauvres femmes". He hoped, therefore, that men would explain to women what war was really about, so that they would take a position against it.[85]

This view of women as possessors of superior moral gifts was one Jaurès shared with those who have been called 'domestic' feminists[86] - a position that linked him to such unlikely comrades as Jane Addams and Catherine Beecher.[87] In fact, Jaurès's argument in the Chambre supporting women's suffrage closely resembled that of Addams. In his 1912 speech, Jaurès argued that voting women would be a 'great civilising force', which would force the political parties to aspire to women's 'high ideals'. "Because only the attraction of a

high ideal and the quasi-religious emotion of a great cause would be able to convince the women to go outside the circle of their domestic preoccupations." [88] (Addams, more practical than Jaurès, had argued six years earlier that women were natural housekeepers who would apply their skills to squalid American cities. [89]

However repugnant Jaurès's reasons for supporting the International's pro-women's rights stand, he did allow the re-creation, in 1913, of a formally-organised group of socialist women, again led by Louise Saumoneau and including Elisabeth Renaud (who was then 67 and less influential than her younger colleague). This time round, however, the group was more amenable to the demands of the SFIO: they dropped 'féministe' from their name (becoming the Groupe des femmes socialistes - GFS), required that members be first 'paid-up members' of the SFIO, and committed themselves to the class struggle above everything. [90]

At last the SFIO had fulfilled one of its International duties. Approval from leaders within the International was quickly sought. Clara Zetkin was, predictably, enthusiastic, [91] though she cautioned that proletarian women, "restrained within the family" had a "retarded intellectual development", against which socialists must guard. Women, she thought, must be led slowly toward socialism via 'women's' propaganda (such as her journal,

Gleichkeit, employed to achieve its 105,000 subscribers).

Zetkin did approve the single feminist gesture of the new GFS, that of organising women separately from men. She told her interviewer, "Once Guesde gave a meeting at Roubaix only for women and it was a great success".[92]

The Nord federation reacted to this national initiative almost immediately. The October regional congress discussed ways and means of recruiting more women into the party, and resolved to begin by launching an inquiry into the problems to be encountered in each section by such a campaign. As an immediate practical action, the congress voted to begin registering all eligible women for Conseils des prud'hommes elections, and to encourage women to stand.[93]

One month later, as a result of the inquiry, the Nord federation issued a formal invitation to women, addressing itself to three groups, among them 'ménagères' 'ouvrières', and 'femmes'. "Ménagères', it began, "too long you have complained that living is more and more expensive. You are not impotent in the struggle against this! Although you are housewives, you can unite. Learn the advantages of unity through cooperatives."[94] To ouvrières they prescribed syndicaiton, and to 'all women'

> Be cooperators, be syndicalists - and, we add, be socialists! Don't think politics are for men only - politics are as much your affair. Are you not interested in protective legislation? In a

> living wage? In help during childbirth, illness, unemployment, old age? Mothers especially, the military service of your sons is your affair. Join the party that defends you, the Parti Socialist. 95

Although the bland assumption that women had hitherto been politically and economically quiescent which underlay these remarks must have aroused some cynicism among the textile workers (particularly those who had organised the 1911 food riots), it was a fresh start by the SFIO to re-discover its lost ties with its female constituency. Unfortunately the party leadership initiated the SPD in this as in other things, and aimed propaganda primarily at wives and mothers. Thus in November, 1913, L'Humanité launched a 'Woman's Page', called 'En Famille' which copied Gleichkeit's household hints, menus, recipes, and so on, this constituted that journal's sole activity in the 'campaign' to recruit women before the war in 1914.

In the unofficial journals of the socialist movement in the period 1905 to 1914, the woman question was both reported and analysed by party leaders and militants representing all the various tendances. The straightforward reports concentrated on the emergent women's movement within the International, which has been discussed before. 96 It need not concern us here. From the theoretical pieces, however, one can discern the slow development of a doctrinal position - multi-faceted, often contradictory,

but nonetheless a position which informed socialist thinking about women for many years; only the re-birth of the women's movement in France in the late 1960s, in face, challenged the SFIO's version of socialist-feminism.

Madeleine Pelletier, one of the women who filled the leadership vacuum left by the temporary retirement of Elisabeth Renaud and Louise Saumoneau after 1906, played a key role in the theoretical debate in these years. Her ideas had three characteristics: a patronising tone, sometimes mixed with anger, toward women of all classes who lacked militancy on their own behalf;[97] an overwhelming concern with women's suffrage and its place within the class struggle; and a confusion of accepted stereotypes about 'woman's nature' and fresh arguments against them.

In the first instance, these words illustrated Pelletier's opinion of many of her comrades:

> Tant que les femmes n'accepteront pas résolument les nécessités de la lutte pour la view, tant que selon leur expression elles continueront à rester femmes, le féminisme ne sera qu'un vain mot. Leur émancipatin ne se réalisera pas parce qu'elles ne mériteront pas d'être libre. [98]

Needless to say, these were the words of an exceptional woman, who had made her own way from a fruit and vegetable shop in Paris to a position as France's first female psychiatrist.[99] It is not surprising therefore that she

often lost patience with her weaker sisters. Nevertheless, they represented the differences which separated Pelletier and other socialist-feminists from, e.g., the textile ouvrières, whose lives were limited by the combined exigencies of the factory whistle and the courée's mud.

The debate over suffrage demonstrated the same gap between thinkers and their subjects, as well as disagreement among the thinkers themselves. Madeleine Pelletier, keenly aware of the SFIO's rejection of women, took the position that women were a contingent problem in socialist theories of liberation. Thus there was no reason to assume their 'automatic' liberation after the revolution. Furthermore, she clung to the basic marxist principle that genuine liberation depends entirely on the struggles of those exploited on their own behalf. She frequently reminded her female comrades that women in the French Revolution had believed the seductive argument that the struggle was for both sexes, and that revolutionary women's groups were unnecessary. "Flattered", Pelletier wrote, "these women accepted, and after a very short time, the mixed associations resulting from the fusion lost all feminist character; men kept for themselves the direction of the groups, and women never subordinated to them."[100] Again and again, Pelletier warned her contemporaries not to lose their feminism in the 'male socialist milieu'.

Others shared Pelletier's view. Jules Tixerant's

La féminisme à l'époque de 1848 dans l'ordre politique et dans l'ordre économique (1907), pointed to women's co-option via the same argument in 1848. Reviewing the book, one writer noted the lesson for contemporary feminists, reminding them that the Constituent Assembly's decree of 28 July, 1848, "interdit non seulement aux femmes de faire partie des clubs, mais même d'assister à leurs séances'.[101]

While Pelletier's view had its adherents, however, there were also those who took a more conciliatory line. Louise Chaboseau-Napius's first article on the suffrage question concluded by soliciting the male socialist leaders for the 'correct line'. (Of those asked, only the German Edouard Bernstein, and the Belgian, Emile Vandervelde, offered any arguments against it.)[102] Others, such as Louise Saumoneau, repeated their hostility to any feminist positions that might potentially divide the class struggle.[103]

The third element in Madeleine Pelletier's feminism - 'the nature of women's nature' as it were - aroused much painful speculation in these years. Among early socialists, Aline Valette had introduced 'domestic feminism' into the Guesdist line. Thus where Jules Guesde had originally argued that women'a nature (like men's) was shaped by material circumstances alone, Valette counterposed the more widely-held view that women were innately different. Valette argued that women

were naturally peaceful, and civilised, and the 'natural educators of children'. Thus women could play a key - if separate - role within the socialist movement. [104]

Pelletier accepted the fact that women were different from men. Like Guesde, however, she presumed that these differences arose out of circumstances. Unlike Guesde, she was relucant to assume that women would easily become equal if only their material circumstances changed. Instead, she argued that women were 'socialised' into inferiority. [105] Parents, she thought, began teaching inequality even before birth, when parental attitudes toward each sex affected the foetus. Once born, children quickly learned their social milieux, in which girls were inferior. Too often, Pelletier added, girls occupied a servant's position vis-à-vis their brothers and fathers, [106] a situation that prepared them for their future roles as wives.

Further, Pelletier was not an 'ouvrierist'. Unlike many bourgeois socialist leaders, anxious to establish their credentials as déclassés, Pelletier came from the working class, and had no illusions. She wrote

> Dans la classe ouvrière, la condition de la femme est également très malheureuse. Là encore l'homme se considère comme son maître absolu; elle est la servante qui remplit auprès de lui les fonctions de cuisinière, de femme de ménage, et de racommodeuse. Dès qu'elle montre la velléité d'émettre une opinion sur une idée générale très durement que son intelligence est trop inférieure pour comprendre cet ordre de choses, et il la renvoie à son ménage avec le plus grand mépris. [107]

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Because of this unhappy state of affairs, Pelletier believed a proletarian revolution would only generalise the low status of prolétariennes to women of all classes. Thus, she concluded, women's liberation must be accomplisehd before the socialist revolution.[108]

Madeleine Pelletier thus became one of the first women to articulate what the present day women's movement calls 'radical feminism', to distinguish it from the three other tendances, marxist-feminism, socialist-feminism, and bourgeois-feminism.[109] What is important about her position was that it came from within the socialist movement, and from a Guesdist. Guesdism was, of course, in theory more amenable to the extension to women of the marxist view that material circumstances, which underlay personality development, could only be changed by the efforts of the exploited to end their own exploitation. In practice, though, no marxist - Guedist or otherwise - supported an interim period before the proletarian revolution devoted to the emancipation of women from sex oppression.

Thus the publication of Madeleine Pelletier's book, La Femme en lutte pour ses droits (1909) aroused immediate hostility from socialists. One anonymous reviewer, writing in Le Mouvement socialiste,[110] declared himself 'scandalised'. He refused, therefore, to cite any of the reasons for his feelings, lest he reveal the

arguments of the book and shock his readers. He was even more shocked that

> L'auteur représente le féminisme socialiste dans le parti et dans les congrès. Elle était la déléguée de la France à la section féminine du Congrès internationale de Stuttgart en 1907; elle le sera sans nul doute encore au congrès prochain de Copenhague. Ces tîtres expliquent la publicité que nous faisons à son livre [he added disapprovingly]. [111]

Pelletier's uncompromising feminism was initially shared by leaders of the Groupe féministe-socialiste. Its journal, La Femme Socialiste, printed a strongly feminist line between 1899 and 1902. In these early years, the editors of the journal (Elisabeth Renaud and Louise Saumoneau) discussed issues familiar to socialist-feminists: women's double enslavement;[112] the role of the suffrage struggle in the class struggle;[113] the historical determinants of women's inferiroity;[114] women's equal rights.[115] Their line tended toward feminism rather than socialism: thus Renaud appealed for international women's solidarity in the struggle to liberate Chinese women from both Chinese custom (especially foot-binding) and European imperialist soldiers (who were reported to be brutalising women in China).[116] With Saumoneau, she also supported Mme Jaurès's right to choose First Communion for her daughter, despite M. Jaurès's protests.[117] In addition, the GFS supported the establishment of a 'woman's tribune' within the national socialist party - which would have equal status with male groups,[118]

but which would struggle primarily to liberate 'doubly oppressed' working women.[119]

After the SFIO refused the GFS a mandate, however, the line gradually changed. By 1912, these same leaders returned to the political scene with a different position. This time they were socialists first, and feminists second, if at all.[120] The SFIO's fear of feminism's debilitating effect on the class struggle had succeeded in winning them over. The new GdFS was given auxiliary party status, and the leaders hastened to commence the education of women for the socialist struggle.

But this enthusiasm to adhere to the official socialist line quickly got them into trouble. Thus they accepted Jaurès's argument that women should lead in the anti-war movement because of their 'pacific natures'. And when the SFIO supported the war credit vote, the women refused to yield.[121] This position rendered them once more unacceptable to the mainstream party; thus the second phase of socialist practice vis-à-vis women came to an ironic end.

Between 1905 and 1914, the SFIO's responses to the problem of a female proletariat were reactive, rather than active. The initial policy of excluding of autonomous women's groups (a result of the exigencies of organising an anarchic concatenation of tendances, and of concern generated by successful bourgeois women's groups among

some ouvrières) yielded gradually to internal pressures from the CGT and from some feminist socialists, and to external pressure from feminists of the Second International. A series of debates about women's place, and women's rights resulted, which in turn began to identify strands of an official policy toward women, which centered on women's domestic roles, and ignored, for the most part, their part in the struggle of an industrial proletariat to overthrow capitalism. Ouvrières were assigned an auxiliary role - as the helpmeets of males engaged in the real struggle. Neither their problems as workers, nor their exploitation within families, found positive place in French socialist theory. Instead, these knotty problems vanished behind vague promises of a socialist utopia which would automatically 'liberate everyone'. The socialist practice that accompanied such promises was similarly amorphous. Not until 1913 did the SFIO pay more than passing lip service to its female constituency - and even then it merely granted some women militants the right to try and organise auxiliary women's groups within the Parti Socialiste. And when even these women - organised into the Groupe Féministe Socialiste - proved less malleable than the Party had supposed, any possibility of their inclusion in the formation of party strategy or tactics disappeared. In the second phase, then, in the period following unification, the views of Jules Guesde which

had informed the earlier years of socialist feminist thinking gave way to those of Jean Jaurès. Domestic feminism replaced a more strictly conceived marxist kind, with women's place in the class struggle confined both figuratively and in fact to the home. On this basis, there would have been little enough point, even had time permitted and the desire been present, for the SFIO to launch a serious campaign to retrieve, recruit and organise a female constituency. So far as the working women of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing were concerned (and they would have been the natural epicentre for any such campaign by the pre-1914 SFIO), there was little in the prescription offered by the French Socialists by the outbreak of war in 1914 of any practical concern or political interest.

CONCLUSION

In the opening decades of the French Third Republic, the female industrial workforce of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing felt the severe economic and social effects of industrial capitalism. In many ways their lives were more limited than those of male workers. In the spinning and weaving mills they endured stricter rules, closer supervision, more onerous work and the lowest pay. Sometimes younger women were forced to put up with sexual harassment from male supervisors, directors and owners, in order to retain their jobs. Their marginal economic status forced them into greater caution, and doubtless prevent a larger number of women's strikes.

In the unsalubrious workers' quartiers of the three growing cities, ouvrières encountered an even tighter strait-jacket of domestic duties, constant pregnancy and ensuing ill-health. Although social controls were apparently less rigid than elsewhere in France - i.e. they could and did socialise in local estaminets, and participate in public community events - their domestic lives consumed their time, energies, and meagre financial resources.

So compelling were these limiting factors, that it would not be unthinkable to adduce them as sufficient explanation for female workers' putative quiescence in

political affairs. Nonetheless, this study reveals the limitations of that widely-held stereotype of European working women at the turn of the nineteenth century. The social order of industrial capitalism aroused both spontaneous protest (e.g. in short-lived 'wild cat' strikes) and rational collective response. Thus women workers formed socialist groups, campaigned for reforms, marched for lower food prices, joined unions and organised successful strikes. In a tightly-knit Flemish community, where workers of both sexes and all ages lived and worked closely together, politics had a distinctly community character, where 'all for one and one for all' was more than an empty slogan. Furthermore, the 'sexual division', apparent in the home lives of textile workers, had no clear effect on political activity at the local level. Only when the external exigencies of national and international socialist politics intruded into the Nord department, did female workers become problematic and ultimately extraneous to the electoral politics of the revolutionary parties.

At the level of socialist theory, Jules Guesde saw early on that female proletarians might properly join a rational, collective movement designed to respond to the particular social order of industrial capitalism. The political practices of the Nord POF during the first decade of its history reflected Guesde's perception. Slowly, however, problems peculiar to organising a

female proletariat emerged. Women of all classes had been excluded from the widening of the pays politique. Their status as partial citizens, virtually without rights in the Third Republic, posed a problem for increasingly electorally-oriented parties of the Left. Furthermore, feminist theory and practice began to compete - and often to contradict - that of the socialists. Unlike socialism, feminism tout court was not a response to the new order of industrial capitalism (except in so far as the latter offered it a wider audience). Its roots lay rather in the partially inexplicable historical subjugation of all women to all men, whatever the particular social forms and conditions.

Thus the Guesdists' initial position with regard to women workers - integrating them as full members of the proletariat whose peculiar needs were neither more nor less than the objects of socialist policies and programmes - yielded as the demands for such reforms began to divide the working class against itself. From the mid-nineties the Guesdists' feminism took on a somewhat spectral quality, lurking between the lines and beneath the surface of socialist critiques of the capitalist order. When feminism did re-emerge in the years after 1905, its character had quite altered. For this generation of socialists, female proletarians had become a women's auxiliary to a socialism which defined their concerns as strictly domestic. Such 'feminism' posed no doctrinal threat.

In neither the first nor second phase of socialist-feminism in Belle Epoque France was there any revolutionary critique of women's domestic situation. In other words, the critique launched by the Guesdist Madeleine Pelletier, concerning the socialisation of women into subordinate domestic and public roles, never found any echo among the leadership of the French Left. This indifference was not surprising. For the years after 1905 the female proletariat was necessarily marginal to the political success of the SFIO, while the earlier and more consciously marxist phase of socialist thinking could never incorporate such a critique into its straightforward account of capitalism and class antagonism. This theoretical incompatibility was exacerbated by the need to maintain socialist theory in this form the better to distinguish an initially beleagured socialist political movement from its increasingly successful syndicalist competitors.

In the early years - the eighties and nineties - the fact that female workers' own attitudes and behaviour (in so far as they can be identified) focussed primarily on their roles as industrial workers meant that the socialist-feminism of the early Guesdists struck a chord, in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing. This ready identification was rooted in the context and condition of such women, as described in the first part of the thesis. But when the socialists shifted towards a more exclusively male

focus in their references to the proletariat, female workers fell away from the movement. They contined to protest, to strike, to join meetings and take part in socialist-led social activities, but their newly peripheral status within the movement showed itself in the progressive disappearance of local socialist women's groups by the turn of the century. The domestic feminism of the later years would find virtually no takers among the textile ouvrières.

Thus the French Left lost the opportunity to integrate female workers - lost it in its formative years. The consequences remain. Both present day left-wing parties in France claim women as an important part of their constituency, but the facts do not support their case: as recently as 1974 women represented a mere 28% of the Paris federation of the PS, while the ongoing difficulties faced by the PCF in raising the proportion of women among its electorate above 40% are well known. With the ambiguous exception of the post-war granting of the suffrage, none of the political and other rights attained by French women can be attributed to left-wing pressures or the actions of left-wing politicians.

Yet the politically-conscious women in France and elsewhere continued to give the official Left the benefit of the doubt. In France today the dominant feminist 'tendance' is socialist and sympathetic to the PS, and the Communists never fail to achieve a passing legitimacy

in their occasional proclamations on behalf of 'exploited women'. Some of this has to do, in France as in Italy, with the absence of any alternative vehicles for the expression of women's concerns; more of it, though, arises from a striking ignorance of the origins of the predicament. There is virtually nothing in the practical difficulties, the theoretical debates and, indeed, the political alternatives, that would not be eerily familiar to the ghosts of Hubertine Auclert, Madeleine Pelletier and the rest. They could even be forgiven for some ethereal cynicism, were they to be heard digging into the marxist canons, with which they were as familiar as their successors, and echoing the suggestion that history repeats itself, first as tragedy, then as farce.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADN	Archives départementales du nord
AN	Archives nationales
APP	Archives de la préfecture de Police
Enquête	sur l'industrie textile, 1904 France. Chambre des Députés, 8e législature, session de 1904. Procès-verbaux de la commission chargée de procéder à une enquête sur l'état de l'industrie textile et la condition des ouvriers tisseurs (Paris, 1906), Vol. 2.
BS	La Bataille Syndicaliste
CdF	Le Cri du Forçat
CdO	Le Cri de l'ouvrier
CdT	Le Cri du Travailleur
E	L'Egalité
FS	La Femme Socialiste
LF	Le Forçat
GS	La Guerre Sociale
H	L'Humanité
MS	Le Mouvement Socialiste
PJ	Le Petit Jaune
RdF	Reveil du Forçat
RS	La Revue Socialiste
LT	Le Travailleur
VdP	La Voix du Peuple

APPENDIX A

The Sexual Division of Labour

Discovering the precise nature of job classification in the textile mills of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing between 1880 and 1914 is virtually impossible. It may be that textile company records which are, and have always been, closed to historians, will some day reveal this information for our period. I have instead pieced together evidence from the following sources:

i. Unpublished Official Documents

ADN M 597/8,11 'Livrets, Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing 1881'

ADN M 572/6,7 'Situation industrielle 1885'.

ii. Published Official Sources

France. Recensement des industries et professions, 1896 (Paris, 1897).

France. Statistique des Grèves, 1896, 1902, 1906, 1911.

France. Chambre des Députés, 8e législature, session de 1904. Procès-verbaux de la commission chargée de procéder à une enquête sur l'état de l'industrie textile et la condition des ouvriers tisseurs (Paris 1906), Vol. II.

France. Salaires et coût de l'existence à diverses époques jusqu'en 1910 (Paris 1911).

France. Bulletin de l'Inspection du Travail, Office du Travail (Paris 1903, 1913).

iii. Published Contemporary Sources

Charles Poisson, Le Salaire des femmes (place of publ. missing, 1906) pp. 21-2.

Léon de Seilhac, La Grève du Tissage de Lille (Paris, 1910).

Léon et Maurice Bonneff, La Vie Tragique des Travailleurs (Paris, 1914) p. 32.

Fédération Nationale de l'industrie textile, comptes-rendu du VIII^{e} congrès, Tourcoing (Tourcoing, 1906).

A close study of these sources leads to several conclusions. First, all the most common jobs in the textile industry were held by men and women alike, though it is probable that some were usually done by men, some by women.

Second, there was a tendency for women to be concentrated in the work of preparation, which involved cleaning, combing and carding, while men dominated in dyeing, bleaching and finishing jobs.

Thirdly, there were some jobs which were regularly performed by only one sex. The documents speak, for instance, only of female moulineuses and bambrocheuses, both jobs in preparation, and of male mécaniciens and graisseurs. The former jobs were among the lowest paid, the latter among the highest. The restriction of machine repair and maintenance to men was in no way a result of superior male strength; instead it was probably a

consequence of the fact that these jobs were not peculiar to the textile factories, so that men could get experience in other kinds of factories that employed few, if any, women (e.g. metallurgy). Boys were also more likely than girls to have some chance of apprenticeships, and fathers who held these high-paying jobs doubtless made some effort to pass the necessary skills on to sons.

Beyond these job categories, there is no further evidence of a clear-cut sexual division of labour in the textile mills. The vast majority of textile workers worked together, often on similar machines, and usually in the same workroom, whatever the local division of jobs.

The debate over a sexual division of labour has emerged in recent years in the work of several historians of women. Louise Tilly and Joan Scott have argued that women's factory labour was an extension of 'familiar' and 'traditional' women's work - e.g. spinning - and that this fact made them politically more conservative than men (see'Women'sWork in Nineteenth Century France', in Proceedings of the Second Meeting of the Western Society for French History, 1974, Austin, Texas, pp. 192-203; and Offen, 'Commentary', ibid, pp. 204-7). Other historians, including inter alia Patricia Branca (Women in Europe since 1750, London 1978), William Reddy ('Family and Factory, French linen weavers in the Belle Epoque', in Journal of Social History, 8, 1975, pp. 102-112)

and Eric Hobsbawm ('Man and Woman in socialist iconography', in History Workshop Journal, 6, winter 1978) have also based conclusions about the political behaviour of women workers on this putative sexual division of labour within the factories, a division supposed to have reflected that within the home.

It seems clear that no such explanations fit the (rather important) case of the textile industry, at least in the cities of northern France in these years. In fact, my study suggests that no such generalisations, all too frequently based on solipsistic contemporary assumptions about the place of women in society, should be offered until many more regional or industry-specific investigations have been undertaken.

NOTES

Chapter 1

1 Adolphe Blanqui, quoted in Georges Sueur, Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing: Métropole en miettes (Paris, 1971) p. 9; Mathilde Bourdon, Marthe Blondel ou l'ouvrière de fabrique (Paris, 1862).

2 Population figures for Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing in 1886 are found in France, Annuaire Statistique 1866 (Imprimerie Nationale, Paris, 1886). For early figures for Lille, see Pierre Pierrard, Lille et les Lillois (Paris, 1967) p. 234. Early figures for Roubaix and Tourcoing are found in Pierre Leman, Alain Derville, Louis Trenard and Felix-Paul Codaccioni, Histoire d'une métropole: Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing (Toulouse, 1977) p. 317. See also Marie-Pascale Buriez-Duez, 'Le Mouvement de la Population dans le département du Nord', in Marcel Gillet, ed., L'Homme, la vie et la mort dans le Nord au 19e siècle (Lille, 1972) p. 17.

The best brief study of French population in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is André Armengaud, La Population française au XIXe siècle (Paris, 1971).

3 For a comparison with other European industrial nations, see discussion of the birth rates of the three cities, infra.

4 A novelist, Maxence van der Meersch, describes the lives of these Belgian textile workers in Roubaix, in Quand les sirènes se taisent (Paris, 1933). The relationships between the Belgian and the French-born workers, though peripheral to the focus of this thesis, will be discussed in more detail in sections II and II, infra.

5 See France, Chambre des Députés, 8e législature, session de 1904. Procès-verbaux de la commission chargée de procéder à une enquête sur l'état de l'industrie textile et la condition des ouvriers tisseurs (Paris, 1906), Vol. 2, (hereafter Enquête sur l'industrie textile, 1904), déposition, Syndicat ouvrier textile, Lille, p. 283; déposition, Conseil des prud'hommes, Tourcoing, p. 461; déposition, Chambre de Commerce, Roubaix, p. 156.

Conflicting reports appear in the dépositions of the Syndicat des fabricants de tapis de Tourcoing, p. 425 (which reported that only 10% of the textile workforce was Belgian), the Syndicat des fabricants de Roubaix-Tourcoing et Lannoy, p. 420 (which estimated 20% of Belgians), and the Syndicat des fabricants de laine, Roubaix, p. 212), ('very few' Belgian workers). The difficulties involved in estimating the number of Belgians from these reports are obvious. Two other historians who have provided

estimates of the number of Belgians are Armengaud, op. cit., and Marie-Pascale Buriez-Duez, 'Le Mouvement', p. 30.

6 For a classic expression of male hostility to women workers in France, see Libres Entretiens, troisième edition, 10 janvier 1909, 'Le travail féminin en concurrence avec le travail masculin'. During this conference, Charles Gide states a widely-held position in these words: "Il ne s'agit plus de protéger la femme contre l'exploitation des fabricants ou des sous-entreprenneurs; il s'agit de protéger l'homme contre la femme", p. 131. Many such hostile remarks aimed at female workers elsewhere in France were directed instead toward Belgians in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing. The issue of hostility to Belgians and to women workers will be addressed in the next two sections of this dissertation. A full account of source material will be provided at that stage.

7 Enquête sur l'industrie textile, 1904, Vol. II, déposition, Juges de paix de Tourcoing, p. 448. The Fédération nationale des ouvriers en textile complained to the same Commission that the Belgians had been the first workers to accept working two machines instead of one (p. 281).

8 van der Meersch, Quand les sirènes se taisent, p. 29.

9 The issue of changing European birth rates in the nineteenth century has its own historiography, much of which is concerned to explain two problems: first, why the birth rate increased so dramatically after the eighteenth century in most of Europe, and, second, why the French birth rate began to fall by mid-nineteenth century, while remaining high elsewhere. The controversail 'sexual revolution' thesis of Edward Shorter (see, inter alia, 'Illegitimacy, sexual revolution and social change in modern Europe', in Journal of Interdisciplinary History, no. 2, 1971, pp. 237-75) argues that 'modernisation' brought with it a new sexual morality. Thus the birth rate climbed. J. Michael Phayer, in 'Lower class morality: the case of Bavaria', in Journal of Social History, Fall 1974, pp. 79-95, argues a similar case. J.A. Banks, in Prosperity and Parenthood. A study of family planning among the Victorian middle classes (London, 1954), argues instead for an economic explanation: workers needed more family members working for wages; ascension of the social ladder brought the birth rate down. For France, Angus McLaren's 'Doctor in the House: medecine and private morality in France, 1800-1850', in Feminist Studies, no. 2, 1975, pp. 39-54, suggests that birth control was widespread only among certain classes, and that certain contraceptive information

was withheld from their wives by men as a means to control women. The former argument, which seems more plausible, is supported by Linda Gordon, in Woman's Body, Woman's Right (Harmondsworth, Middx, 1977), see esp. pp. 149, 154, 215. Marcel Gillet, op. cit., p. 9, argues that strong religious values in the Nord helped keep the birth-rate high. Michel Rouche, in 'La recherche historique sur la femme, l'amour, et le mariage', in Revue du Nord, Vol. 53, 1971, pp. 313-317, offers some useful criticisms of techniques employed in this historical research. Information gathered for this thesis (see below) tends to support the view that ignorance, rather than 'traditional values', was responsible for the high birth rate among workers.

10 See Pierrard, op. cit., p. 234 for France. For Germany and Britain see B.R. Mitchell, European Historical Statistics 1750-1970, (New York, 1978).

11 See Buriez-Duez, 'Le Mouvement' pp. 23-24. Also, Dr. J. Goldstein, 'La Question de la dépopulation en France', in MS, Tome III, jan-juin 1900, pp. 599-608, 658-664.

12 France, Recensement de la Population, 1911 (Imprimerie Nationale, Paris, 1912).

13 See Michelle Perrot's excellent brief discussion of the problems of French social history in Enquêtes

sur la condition ouvrière en France au 19e siècle (Paris, n.d.) pp. 13-20, and the remarks of Tony Judt, Socialism in Provence, 1871-1914 (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 337-342.

14 The textile patronat of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing were, and remain, extraordinarily secretive - notoriously so. Two prefectoral reports reflect the deliberate vagueness of the patronat. In Archives Départementales du Nord (hereafter ADN), séries M, dossier 572, pièces 6,7, 'Situation industrielle 1885', the Chambre de Commerce de Roubaix reported to the prefect that the number of textile workers could not be given, since the situation changed from day to day. A report in the Archives Nationales (hereafter AN), séries C3019, pièce 36, 'Enquête des situations ouvrières, 1872-85' quotes one Roubaix weaving-mill owner who reported to the prefect that he had 'between 2,500 and 9,000 workers'.

15 One example of an official prefectoral report illustrates some of the problems inherent in using French government statistics. This report, written in 1891, comprised more than 10 hand-written (and often illegible) pages, which purported to list all the men, women and children employed in every textile factory in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing. Addition produced an implausible set of figures:

only 8,909 men and 8,212 women were recorded as working in Lille, 10,057 men and 8,212 women in Roubaix, and 4,079 men and 3,006 women in Tourcoing. If ouvriers and ouvrières represented at least 60% of the population of the three cities, as one historial has estimated, then there were about 215,695 workers (of all kinds) in the three cities, at the turn of the century. Yet this report showed only 39,878 of them working in the major industry!

Part of the explanation may stem from the frequent, extended periods of unemployment which afflicted the textile industry throughout our period. Furthermore, if the data were gathered between October and February - months when the textile industry was 'dead' - the low figures might have been accurate, but only for the low season. The exact date of collection is missing, however. Another possibility is that the Third Republic only collected data on factories included in the 1874 law on workers' hours, i.e., those with more than 100 workers. Finally, a close examination of this particular 1891 enquête reveals an interesting - and unlikely - duplication of figures for many factories appearing consecutively. Thus row after row, page after page, the numbers are often identical. This suggests a careless, and possibly tired reporter, anxious to cease going from

factory to factory, frustrated by the patronat's reluctance to give figures, who simply filled some of the blank columns with numbers obtained from the first establishment visited.

See ADN, M591, 1, 1-10, 'Travail dans l'industrie', 1891; and Pierre Leman, et al., Histoire d'une métropole, which estimates that 65% of the population of the three cities were workers (see p. 375).

16 See, e.g., Marcelle Capy, 'Industrie textile. Quelques réflexions', in BS, 20 avril 1914.

17 In Enquête sur l'industrie, 1904 see the following dépositions: Chambre de Commerce, Lille, p. 243 (which states that daily changes prevent any estimate of numbers of workers); Chambre de Commerce, Roubaix, p. 155; Inspecteur départemental de Roubaix, p. 223; Fédération textile - la Solidarité Ouvrière, Tourcoing, p. 427; Chambre Syndicale - l'Union des travailleurs ouvriers du tissage, p. 432.

18 Various examples of French social history which depend upon statistical data are criticised in Tony Judt, 'A Clown in regal purple: Social history and the historians', in History Workshop Journal, No. 7, Spring 1979, pp. 66-94; William Reddy, in 'Family and Factory: French linen weavers in the Belle Epoque', Journal of Social History, Vol. VIII, no. 4, 1974, pp. 102-112, states at the outset that he

intends to 'quantify' attitudes, but he counts not attitudes (about which he knows little) but rather the number of family members working in factories. He offers no caveat regarding the unreliability of his data. Louise Tilly's argument in 'Structure de l'emploi, travail des femmes et changement démographique dans deux villes industrielles: Anzin et Roubaix 1872-1906', in MS, no. 105, décembre 1978, pp. 33-58, also rests on quantitative data drawn from frequently unreliable sources.

19 ADN, M611-18, 'Travail des femmes adultes dans les manufactures. Enquête, 1882-3'.

20 France. Résultats statistiques du recensement des industries et professions, 12 mars 1896 (Paris, 1896) pp. 64-65. It should be noted that after the founding of the Office du Travail in 1891, the work inspectors became the reporters of basic data. Figures are thus probably somewhat more accurate following this centralisation of the collecting of information.

21 Ibid.

22 These totals are a composite drawn from various witnesses before the 1904 parliamentary commission. See Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, Vol. II, déposition, l'inspecteur départemental de Roubaix,

p. 223; déposition, La Solidarité ouvrière, Tourcoing, p. 427; déposition, M. Gillet, l'inspecteur du travail, Lille, première section, p. 338; déposition, M. Herbo, l'inspecteur du travail, Lille, deuxième section, p. 339.

23 BS, 20 avril 1914.

24 According to figures given in France, Résultats statistiques du recensement des industries,

25 Pierre Sorlin, La Société française, Vol. 1, 1840-1914, (Paris, 1969) p. 125.

26 Léon et Maurice Bonneff, La Vie tragique des travailleurs (Paris, 1914) pp. 24-28.

27 Pierrard, Lille et les Lillois, p. 126.

28 Adolphe Blanqui, quoted in Sueur, Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing, p. 9.

29 Bonneff, La Vie tragique des travailleurs (Paris, 1914) pp. 24-28, and Sueur, Lille, Roubaix, and Tourcoing, pp. 16-17.

30 Jacques Toulemonde, Naissance d'une Métropole: Roubaix et Tourcoing à u XIX^{e} siècle (Tourcoing, n.d.) p. 79.

31 Leman, Derville, et al., Histoire d'une métropole, p. 360.

32 Pierrard, Lille et les Lillois, p. 226.

33 France. Statistique générale de la France. Statistique des familles et des habitations en 1911 (Paris 1912).

34 Maxence van der Meersch, Quand les sirènes se taisent (Paris, 1933) pp. 13-14.

35 Caroline Milhaud, L'Ouvrière en France, (Paris, 1907) p. 124.

Chapter 2

1 Aftahon is quoted in Bonneff, La Vie tragique des travaileurs, (Paris, 1914) p. 29. See also Marcelle Capy, 'Drames du Travail', in BS, 17 avril 1914.

2 M. Leclerc de Pulligny, 'Les Conditions de l'hygiène dans les filatures de lin', in France. Bulletin de l'Inspection du Travail 1902 (Paris, 1903) p. 233.

3 P. Brisson, Histoire du Travail et des travailleurs (Paris, 1906) p. 443.

4 Bonneff, La Vie tragique des travailleurs (Paris, 1914), p. 23.

5 Ibid., p. 30.

6 See Friedrich Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England (Moscow, 1973) pp. 183-4. Engels

shared a common view that men who shared in housework were risking their masculinity - see esp. p. 184.

7 Eric Hobsbawm, 'Man and woman in Socialist Iconography', in History Workshop Journal, no. 6, Autumn 1978, p. 131. Elsewhere in this same article, Hobsbawm concludes that 'precisely in the period when the mass labour movement emerged in the industrially advanced countries', women withdrew into familial preoccupations (p. 138). His entire argument conflates the history of British working-class women into the histories of European women. Thus married women in Britain were much less likely to continue factory work after marriage by the turn of the century. See Kathleen Gales and P.H. Marks, 'Twentieth century trends in the work of women in England and Wales', in Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, series A, Vol. 137, Part 1, 1974, pp. 60-71. (I am greatful to Dr. Gillian Sutherland for pointing out the differences between England and France in married women's work, and for supplying this reference).

However, the case in at least two French departments was quite the reverse - as we shall see, infra - rendering such hypotheses as those of Hobsbawn doubtful. Other historians who have

proposed a similar equation marriage = withdrawal from factory work, which in turn = political unconcern - include Louise Tilly and Joan Scott, in Women, Work and Family (New York, 1979) esp. pp. 188, 208. In the view of these authors, women did join protests, however, when the issue directly concerned the family. Patricia Branca (in Women in Europe since 1750, London, 1978) has argued that all women's identity was focussed within the family; thus they had no interest in the outside world. (I have criticised both these works in some detail, in a review in Social History, (Autumn 1979) and in an essay in International Labor and Working Class History, (Fall 1979) Finally, Michelle Perrot, too, leans towards this view in 'Les Ménagères et la classe ouvrière', unpublished paper delivered at a Colloque in Vincennes, 'Les Femmes et la Classe Ouvrière', 16 December, 1978.

8 France, Recensement Générale de la population 1901 (Paris, 1902). The obvious danger - that figures quoted for the Nord department are wildly unrepresentative - can be avoided in part by looking at other areas of France. My own analysis of the 1905 data concerning the Seine-Inférieure, a department with some rather similar occupational structures to those of the Nord, revealed the following:

There were 274,000 women between the ages of 15 and 64, of whom 168,000 were 'active' in all fields. Since only 92,000 women were single in 1905, we are forced to conclude that even in the absurdly unlikely event that every unmarried woman was at work, 42% of married women must have been employed as well. Even if we count all widows and divorcées as single women, and further assume that all of them worked full time, 29.2% of the married women would still have had to be at work in order to make up the active female population.

A more refined analysis, assuming that some 59% of the female population was 'ouvrière' - a percentage derived from the estimates given for Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing in Leman, Derville, et al., Histoire d'une Métropole, p. 378 - and assuming that ouvrières married in the same percentage as women in the department as a whole - results in an estimated total of some 60,000 married, divorced and widowed women at work in service and industrial occupations. From this it can be estimated that some 58% of all ouvrières who married remained at work.

The evidence from the Seine-Inférieure, then, far from suggesting that the Nord was a-typical indicates that, if anything, my estimates there erred on the side of caution. Other departments, of course, might suggest otherwise. It does, however,

seem clearly the case that there is little statistical support in France for the a priori assumption that marriage involved withdrawal from the labour force for most working women. In view of the qualitative evidence to the contrary, the onus would seem to be on proponents of such a thesis to provide more evidence in support of it than they have hitherto done (data for the Seine-Inferieure is taken from France, Annuaire Statistique, 1905 (Paris, 1906).

9 See Louise Chaboseau-Napias, 'Les femmes et le socialisme', H, 19 fevrier, 1907, who refers to the 'double work' of working women.

In 1894, , the Parti ouvrier militant, Aline Valette, expressed a widely-held view of married women workers in these words: "Just as the word 'proletarian' applied to men is synonymous with work, with suffering, now much more so it is, in its application to women, a synonym for double work, double suffering..." See LT, 16 mai, 1894.

10 Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, dépositions, Fédération nationale des ouvriers en textile, Lille, p. 301;

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10 Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, dépositions, Fédération nationale des ouvriers en textile, Lille, p. 301;

Syndicat des ouvriers de l'industrie textile, Roubaix, p. 174; Chambre de Commerce, Roubaix, p. 155. See also Dr. Henri Thiroux, 'Assistance et hygiène sociale', in MS, Tome 1, jan-juin 1902, p. 313, and A. Vallin, La Femme salariée et la maternité (Paris, 1911), p. 25. Both Thiroux and Vallin discussed the effects of women working up until giving birth upon infant mortality.

11 The cost of living will be discussed in detail, infra, where sources will be cited. The world described in van der Meersch's novel, Quand les sirènes, op. cit., written at the beginning of the thirties, was also that of the textile cities before the First World War; and all members of textile families worked whenever they could.

12 William Reddy, 'Family and Factory: French linen weavers in the Belle Epoque', in Journal of Social History, loc. cit., p. 108. In the same article we read, "For the earliest factory workers, both the idleness of women and children and factory work would have seemed evil. So faced with this dilemma, they (i.e. male workers) tried to bring members of their families into the factories..."

It is simply not the case that such conflation of 'worker' with 'male worker' is a justifiable historiographical result of loaded or ambiguous

source data - nor were contemporary working women drawn into the trap of separating 'work' in general from the labouring activities of women in particular. L'Exploitée, the journal of Swiss union women in 1907-1908, labelled itself 'Organe des femmes travaillant dans les usines, les ateliers, les ménages', and was clear throughout moreover that wives who did not work outside their homes were also ouvrieres. In another case, a group of textile workers in Wignehies and Fourmies (also in the Nord department) addressed an 'Appel aux femmes de Lille' in these words, which grouped working-class women under a single heading: 'Ouvrières comme vous, comme vous mères, femmes ou filles d'ouvriers...' in LT, 19 septembre 1891.

Even here, however, it remains unclear whether the final 'ouvriers' refers to both sexes or men alone. This (un)intentional linguistic obfuscation is a common difficulty in French sources.

The late nineteenth to early twentieth century view that women occupied a separate sphere from which they were incapable of acting on their own behalf often led to the use of 'workers' as a term interchangeable with 'men'. Consequently, William Reddy,

the sex-specific use of the term 'worker' by a police spy who was, ironically, reporting a strike of more than 100 women weavers, about to be laid-off. In a strike meeting, someone (probably a woman) demanded that apprentices be laid off rather than women. The informer wrote: "On this subject, opinions have divided; workers, according to whether they have their wives or their sons employed at the factory, are for the laying off of apprentices or female weavers". Reddy, apparently satisfied with this loaded report of what was, after all, a women's strike, concludes, "clearly the power of decision rested with heads of families who had to select the demand that would maximize their families' incomes". The women strikers thus vanish as actors on this historical stage.

13 Marie-Pascale Buriez-Duez, 'Le mouvement de la population', p. 24.

14 Leman, Derville, et al., Histoire d'une métropole, p. 378.

15 In 1896, the average number of children per family in France was 2.2. See Jean-Marie Mayeur, Les Débuts de la Troisième République (Paris, 1973), p. 56.

16 See AN C 3019, pièce 36, Enquête des situations ouvrières, 1872-85.

Aline Lesaege-Dugied, 'La Mortalité infantile

dans le departement du Nord de 1815 a 1914', in Marcel Gillet, ed., L'Homme, la vie, pp. 104-105. Ouvrières tended to have a particularly high birth rate. In Lille in 1899, for example, there were 1,307 children born to factory workers, 646 to atelier workers, and 225 to women working in the domestic out-putting system. Compared to this total of 2,178 children, there were only 89 children born to shopkeepers and 38 to teachers and other while-collar workers. (These latter figures suggest that unlike working class women, women of other classes did not tend to work after marriage.)

17 Bonneff, La Vie tragique..., p. 37.

18 Lesaege-Dugied, La Mortalité infantile, p. 104.

19 Pierrard, Lille et les Lillois, p. 242.

20 For further details at the national level see B.R. Mitchell, Historical Statistics, pp. 42-43.

21 Aline Valette, 'La Femme dans l'usine', in LT, 3 février, 1894.

22 Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, déposition de l'Association des ouvriers de l'industrie textile d'Armentières et d'Houplines, p. 72.

23 Ibid. Figures for France as a whole are from Mitchell, Historical Statistics, p. 42.

24 Alexandre Desrousseaux, Dame Victoire, quoted in Pierre Pierrard, La Vie Quotidienne dans le Nord au XIX^{e} siècle, (Paris, 1976), p. 24.

25 See Octave Soyer, 'Garderies Enfantines', loc. cit. See also Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, déposition, Fédération syndicale de l'industrie tourquennoise (jaune), which reported that its women's sections said they trusted their children only to relatives and friends, fearing they would lack good care elsewhere (see p. 397). This was a piece of anti-socialist propaganda - it was the socialists who provided the free municipal crèches in Lille and Roubaix and who promised to do so in Tourcoing if elected. However, the practice of leaving children with neghbours or friends was indeed the usual alternative to crèches (of which there were very few).

26 Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, déposition, Victor Renard, Fédération nationale des ouvriers en textile, p. 302.

27 Marcel Gillet, 'Présentation generale', in Gillet, ed., L'Homme, la vie, p. 28, argues that religious tradition remained strong in the Nord, while it diminished in most of the rest of France. Pierre Pierrard, however, argues that anti-clericalism was widespread among textile workers by the end of the Second Empire. See Pierrard, La Vie Ouvrière à Lille

sous le Second Empire, Paris, 1965, p. 368. The problem of the level of Catholic practice in the Lille area is a vexed one. Lille was in the Cambrai diocese until 1913, and those diocesen records burned completely in 1918. There are speculative discussions of the subject in François Bédarida and Jean Maitron, Christianisme et monde ouvrier, Paris, 1971, in which is found Yves-Marie Hilaire, 'Les Ouvriers de la region du Nord devant l'Eglise catholique - XIX^{e} et XX siècles', pp. 223-238. This author argues that the Redemptorist fathers thought that the Lille area had a low level of practice among 'ouvriers' (p. 225). In Roubaix and Tourcoing, he argues, large numbers ("même de la classe ouvrière") went regularly to mass (p. 230). He adds that Tourcoing was the most religious of all. Nevertheless, he points out that most of the evidence for these statements no longer exists, and that perhaps private documents could be examined. Claude Willard, in 'Les Attaques contre Notre Dame de l'Usine', in Bédarida and Maitron, pp. 244-50, argues that textile workers were anti-clerical in our period. Given the absence of detailed research into 'private letters' and such, and the loss of the usual sources, it seems likely that historians have concluded whatever their political orientation suggested as plausible. As for birth control, women's

ignorance of methods might be as good an argument as any other.

28 Pierre Pierrard remarks that during the Second Empire, abortions and other contraceptive methods were apparently not used by the Lille working class (see Pierrard, La Vie Ouvrière à Lille sous le Second Empire (Paris, 1965), p. 124).
Angul McLaren, in 'Doctor in the House', in Feminist Studies, no. 2, 1975, pp. 39-54, agrees with Pierrard that birth control methods were less well-known among the working class than among other social classes in France, even at the end of the century (p. 48). The issue of birth control in France is also addressed in the writings of Michel Rouche and Linda Gordon cited above.
Margery Spring Rice's 1930 study, Working Class Wives (London, 1939), also demonstrates the ignorance of many working-class women about contraception (see pp. 52-57).

29 Reports of textile workers' organisations which emphasised women's special interests as mothers are found in LT, 3 décembre 1892, 8 janvier 1893, 11 janvier 1893, 15 janvier 1893.

Many socialists in this period had read Engels' Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State and shared his views that the original communism was to be located in matriarchal societies.

Aline Valette, in 'La Femme et la loi morale', LT, 7 avril 1894, uses this view of the special morality of mothers to argue for a new 'moral order' in which the sexual double standard would be abolished.

30 The dissemination of birth control information became an issue, though apparently a minor one, among textile workers in the first decades of the twentieth century. In a strike meeting during the 1909 general textile strike in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing, for example, one woman, Citoyenne Petit, demanded a special meeting for women strikers to discuss, among other things, "women's hygiene, the dangers of the corset, and the limitations of births". Neo-Malthusianism also spread among workers in the opening years of the twentieth century, and the workers' press included articles on the problems of birth control and French de-population. Léon de Seilhac, La Grève de Tissage de Lille (Paris, 1910), p. 56.

31 See Albert Sauzede, 'Les Naissances en France', in RS, Tome LII, juillet-décembre 1910, pp. 252-54, in which he wrote "Women reject more and more the servitude of maternity" (p. 253); also D. Sieurin, 'Familles ouvrières', in VdP, 21-28 septembre 1902, which demands birth control to limit the amount of 'working-class flesh' available for exploitation.

The views of working women themselves are hard to find; one women's journal, l'Exploitée, ran a series of articles on birth control during 1907 and 1908. In the opening piece one woman wrote,

> Readers, have you not been struck by the fact that large families are nearly always found in the working class and not in the bourgeoisie? And have you found the reason? It is simple. The bourgeoisie knows the means to restrain the number of their children while the workers are ignorant of them...And do you not find it abominable that women...are forced to accept the risks, the dangers of maternity? (L'Exploitée, 1 mai 1907).

Some of the problems of writing the history of birth control in France are discussed in Jean-Paul Enthoven, 'Tu ne feras point périr ton fruit', un entretien avec Jean-Louis Flandrin, in Le Nouvel Observateur, no. 780, 22-28 octobre 1979, pp. 76-79.

32 Descriptions of women's problems resulting from constant child-bearing are found in Dr. Henri Thiroux, Assistance et Hygiene sociale', in MS, Tome I, janvier-juin 1902, p. 313; F. Engels, Condition of the Working Class, p. 181; Pierrard, La Vie Quotidienne, pp. 24-25.

33 Bonneff, La Vie tragique, p. 27.

34 Dr. Verhaeghe's study was reported by Marcelle Capy, 'Drames du Travail'.

35 See Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, déposition, Fédération de l'industrie textile de Lille et environs, p. 309.

36 Dr. Jules Thiercelin, 'La Lutte contre la tuberculose', in MS, Tome II, juillet-décembre 1901, p. 279.

Tuberculosis was not a disease limited to textile workers in this period. In 1901, France led Western Europe in deaths from tuberculosis, with 150,000. In that same year, England, Scotland, and Ireland combined had only 58,000 deaths. But the disease did strike the poor, more than any other segment of the population, and in the slums of the textile cities, where working conditions exacerbated any lung illness, it struck in force.

37 Discussions of the problems of alcoholism among textile workers appear in Bonneff, La Vie tragique, p. 41; Marcelle Capy, 'Pour Oublier', in BS, 19 avril 1914. One historian, G. Franchomme, in 'L'Evolution démographique et économique de Roubaix de 1870 à 1900', Revue du Nord, no. 201, avril-juin 1969, calculates that in Roubaix in 1890, the average per capita consumption of beer was 208 litres per year.

38 Bonneff, La Vie tragique, p. 41.

39 Pierre Pierrard describes the polluted canals and public water supplies in Lille et les Lillois, p. 226-227.

40 Descriptions of workers' diets are to be found in Marcelle Capy, 'Mal logés, mal nourris: l'ouvrière chez elle', in BS, 16 avril 1914, and in Bonneff, La Vie Tragique des travailleurs, p. 40.

41 Leon Diagoras, La Genèse d'une métropole (Roubaix, 1969) p. 42.

42 Pierre Pierrard, La Vie Ouvrière, p. 353.

43 AN C 3019, 'Enquête sur les situations ouvrières, 1872-1885', pièce 37.

A study of literacy in this region by François Furet and Jacques Ozouf, 'Literacy and Industrialisation: the case of the Département du Nord in France', in Journal of European Economic History, Vol. 5, no. 1, Spring 1976, pp. 5-44, supports this view of a low literacy rate among the working class of this area (see page 42).

44 Françoise Mayeur, L'Enseignement secondaire des jeunes filles sous la Troisième République, (Paris, 1977) p. 156. In the period 1886-1905, Mayeur notes that in France as a whole, the number of scholarships available for workers' children's secondary schooling dropped - from 18.1% in 1886 to 3.1% in 1905. She

adds that among these rare scholarship children almost none as female.

45 Ibid., p. 186.

46 Primary schooling for textile workers' children was widely available by the 1890s. See reports in LT, 3 decembre 1892 and throughout january 1893. Also Henri Ghesquière, 'L'Assistance intellectuelle à Lille', in MS, Tome I, jan-juin 1899, pp. 230-234; Félix Chabroilland, 'La municipalité de Roubaix', in MS, Tome III, jan-juin 1900, pp. 545-555.

47 Pierrard, La Vie Ouvrière, op. cit., p. 319.

48 See Chapter 1.

49 See Louise Leyssieux, 'Protestation du syndicat des ouvriers et ouvrières en soiries de Vizille', in VdP, 12-19 mai, 1907, and Lucie Baud, 'Les Tisseuses de soie dans la région de Vizille', in MS, Tome II, jan-juin 1908, pp. 418-425.

50 See Marcelle Capy, 'L'Usine de la lampe Osram', in BS, 2 octobre 1913; Fanny Clar, 'Littérature malsaine', in GS, 2-7 avril, 1913 (where she discusses the evils of the '13 sous novels' which diverted women workers' attention from the class struggle); finally an anti-militarist piece in VdP, 9 décembre 1900, which called on women to give as much feeling to the real world as to the fantasy realm of the

serialised novel.

Throughout this period the workers' press carried feuilletons, or serialised novels. The preferred authors, in abridged format, were Zola and Anatole France. The situation was not markedly different elsewhere, although in the United States women factory workers' preferences were apparently for cheap, romantic novels (see inter alia Thomas Dublin, Women at Work, New York, 1979, a study of the Lowell mill girls). A recent study, produced under the auspices of the Parti Communiste Français, suggests that there has been remarkably little change in such tastes - see Louisette Blanquart, Chiffres et Commentaires sur la 'Presse Féminine' (Paris, 1978).

51 Marcelle Capy, 'La Féodalite industrielle', in BS, 14 mars, 1914.

52 See ADN, M 161 'Fêtes diverses, 1871-1910'; ADN, M222m pièce 460, 'Lille, cercles, 1884-1901'; ADN, M 222/2001, 'L'Union ouvrière, l'Alliance chorale, 1884'; ADN, M 201/9, 'La Muse des travailleurs 1893'. See also weekly announcements and descriptions of family fêtes in LT, 1891-1895, and CdT, 1887-1891.

53 E. Musezus, 'Le chansonnier lillois, Alexandre Desrousseaux', in RS, Tome XIII, jan-juin, 1896, p. 455. A rough translation is: 'Sleep, my little Quinquin, my little chicken, my chubby rooster/ You will cause me s orrow/ If you do not sleep until tommorow'.

54 Clovis Hugues, 'Pauvre Mère', in Le Cri du Travailleur, 13 septembre 1890.

55 Marcelle Capy, 'Pour Oublier',

56 Ibid.

57 Enquête sur l'industrie 1904: déposition, Chambre de Commerce de Lille, p. 243.

58 Interested readers are referred to Bonnie Sullivan Smith, The women of the Lille bourgeoisie, 1850-1914 (unpub. PhD dissertation, University of Rochester, 1975), and M. l'Abbé R. Talmy, L'Association Catholique des patrons du Nord, 1884-1895 (Lille, 1962).

59 Henri Ghesquière, 'L'Action des municipalités socialistes: assistance communale à Lille', in MS, Tome I, janvier-juin 1899, p. 117.

60 'Les 10 heures', VdP, 10-17 avril 1904.

61 Ghesquière, L'Action.

62 See Bonnie Sullivan Smith, The Women (n.p.).

63 Ibid.

64 A. Vallin, La Femme salariée et la maternité (Paris? 1911) pp. 183-4.

65 Ibid.

66 Quoted in Talmy, L'Association, p. 384.

67 ADN M 151/7 'Partis politiques, dossiers individuels 1878'.

68 The differences between Tourcoing on the one hand and Lille and Roubaix on the other are not easily explained. Because political differences, already marked in our period (Tourcoing never elected a socialist municipality), remain to the present day, their nature and origins pose an interesting problem in political sociology.

Chapter 3

1 ADN M 572/8 'Régime industriel. Rapports sur la situation de l'industrie, 1886 avril, Lille'.

2 ADN M 581/148 'Usines. Renseignements statistiques, 1891'.

3 Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, déposition. Chambre de commerce de Lille, p. 242.

4 Ibid. déposition, Chambre de Commerce de Roubaix, p. 154.

5 France. Statistique Générale de la France 1882, Tome XII, (Paris, 1883).

6 See Clause Fohlen, L'Industrie textile au temps du Second Empire (Paris, 1956) p. 463.

7 Ibid.

8 ADN M 472/9 'Régime industriel. Rapports sur la situation de l'industrie, Chambre de Commerce de Roubaix, 30 avril 1885'.

9 See Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, déposition, Chambre de Commerce de Roubaix, p. 153, which reports the absence of any new wool combing or carding machinery since the 1860s-70s; Jean Jaurès, 'Le témoinage extraordinaire sur le patronat', quoted in Jacques Dumortier, Le Syndicat Patronal Textile de Roubaix-Tourcoing de 1942-1972 (Lille, 1972), annèxe II, and Jean Jaurès, 'Les Grèves d'Armentières', in La Revue Socialiste, Tome XXXVIII, juillet-décembre 1903, p. 578; Leman et al., Histoire d'une Métropole, p. 352.

10 Jaurès, 'Les Grèves', ibid., p. 578.

11 ADN M 572/8 'Rapports sur la situation de l'industrie'.

12 Ibid.

13 Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, Vol. 2, Tableaux I, IV; 'Cours moyens annuels du coton, lin, chanvre, jute de 1890 à 1904' and 'Cours moyens des laines peignées, 1891 à 1903, Roubaix et Tourcoing'.

14 ADN M 625/1-3, extract from Progrès du Nord, 22 janvier, 1904. Figures quoted by Victor Renard, president of the (socialist) Fédération nationale des ouvriers textiles.

15 See note 13, supra, and France, Bulletin de l'Office du Travail, 1896 (Paris, 1897).

16 Jacques Toulemonde, Naissance d'une Métropole: Roubaix et Tourcoing au XIX^{e} siècle (Tourcoing, n.d.) p. 64.

17 It is possible that the influence of growing feminist movements - as well as the entry of more middle-class women into the labour market - affected this change from heavier, more restricting wool clothing to clothing made of lighter materials.

18 AN F7 12767 'Industrie textile: renseignements généraux, questions ouvrières, 1900-1910'.

19 Exports of combed and carded wool from Roubaix and Tourcoing grew from 15,252,197 kg and 12,156,939 kg in 1882 to 33,631,589 kg and 31,539,464 kg in 1904. These export figures represented just over one-third of the total production of Roubaix and Tourcoing during these years. See Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, dépositions, Chambres de Commerce de Roubaix, pp. 153ff, de Tourcoing, pp. 370 ff, de Lille, pp. 242ff.

20 Ibid, déposition, Syndicat des peigneurs de laine, filtiers de laine et de coton, Roubaix-Croix et Tourcoing, pp. 200, 204.

21 France, Office du Travail, Enquête sur la réduction de la durée du travail le samedi (Paris, 1913).

22 Victor Renard, 'La Vie Confédérale', Voix du Peuple, 7-14 septembre, 1913.

23 Several good descriptions of the textile processes exist. See, inter alia, Marcelle Capy, 'Filature au sec', in BS, 23 mars 1914; Capy, 'Filature au mouillé', BS, 26 mars 1914; Capy, 'Fil du lin. Dernières manipulations', BS, 29 mars 1914; Capy, 'Filature du coton', BS, 6 avril 1914; Capy, 'Le Tissage', BS, 13 avril 1914; M. Leclerc de Pulligny, 'Les conditions d'hygiène dans les filatures de lin', in France, Bulletin de l'Inspection du Travail 1903 (Paris, 1904), pp. 230-260; M.P. Bellon, 'Le Dépouissiérage des carderies de coton', in France. Bulletin de l'Inspection du Travail, 1905 (Paris, 1906) pp. 432-328; M. Boulin, 'La Ventilation des cardes a laine', in Ibid., 1906 (Paris, 1907), pp. 261-270; Jean-Etienne Burlet, La Laine et l'industrie lainière (Paris, 1972).

24 Pierre Leman, et al., op. cit., pp. 350-351. VdP 10-17 avril 1904 reported that the Mottes collectively employed, in that year, some 15,000 Roubaisiens.

25 Toulemonde, op. cit., p. 63.

26 Derville, Trenard, Histoire d'une Métropole, p. 386.

27 See Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, rapport. L'Inspecteur départemental de Roubaix, M. Bellon, pp. 230-231, and 'Patronat et proletariat textiles',

in VdP, 22-29 mai, 1904.

28 Bonnie Sullivan Smith, loc. cit. M. l'Abbé R. Talmy, op. cit.

29 Analyses of the ideology of 'woman's place' are to be found in Viola Klein, The Feminine Character: History of an Ideology (New York, 1946); Françoise Basch, Relative Creatures (New York, 1974), esp. pp. 3-15 (which, though dealing with Britain, reveals certain common beliefs about the nature of women); Madeleine Guilbert, Les Fonctions des femmes dans l'industrie, (Paris, 1966), esp. pp. 55ff; Yvonne Kinbiehler, 'Les médecins et "la Nature féminine" au temps du Code Civil', in Annales ESC, no. 4, juillet-août 1976, pp. 824-845; and the excellent, detailed analysis of Third Republican views on woman's place in Françoise Mayeur, L'Enseignement secondaire des jeunes filles sous la Troisième République (Paris, 1977). Socialist and feminist thinking on these matters will be discussed in Parts II and IV, infra.

30 Bonnie Sullivan Smith, loc. cit., p. 131.

31 Ibid.

32. Jules et Gustave Simon, La Femme du Vingtième Siècle, (Paris, 1892) p. 109.

33 Thus Jules Michelet objected to women working because work deprived them of their special place. Women's work was, he wrote, the

> Barbarie de notre Occident! La femme n'a plus été comptée pour l'amour, le bonheur de l'homme, encore moins comme maternité et comme puissance de race; mais comme ouvrière!

See Michelet, La Femme (Paris, n.d.) p. 22. Nineteenth-century French views of women's sexuality and their ignorance of it are found in Angus McLaren's article, 'Doctor in the House', loc. cit., pp. 39-54.

34 Michelet, op. cit., p. 22.

35 Madeleine Guilbert has studied women's increasing participation in the French factory labour force after the turn of the century in Les Fonctions, passim.

36 See Dumortier, Le Syndicat Patronal Textile, annexe II.

37 AN C 3019 'Enquête des situations ouvrières 1872-85', pièce 37, questionnaire B, 'Des salaires et des rapports entre les ouvriers et les patrons'.

38 Dr. Rene Potelet, 'Les Crèches d'usines dans le département du Nord', in Bulletin de l'Office du Travail, 1909 (Paris, 1910), pp. 429-31.

39 Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, dépositions, juge de paix de Roubaix, canton nord, p. 218; juge de paix, Roubaix, canton ouest-est, p. 221; juges

de paix, trois cantons, Tourcoing, p. 450; M. Boulisset, inspecteur divisionnel, et Mm Herbo et Gillet, inspecteurs du travail a Lille, p. 326; J.-B. Knockaert, 'La Lutte contre le patronat textile à Tourcoing', in BS, 13 octobre 1913, who notes that the extreme piety of the Catholic patronat was deformed into an ideology designed to keep workers resigned and passive.

40 Alice Delucheux, 'L'Emancipation de la femme', in BS, 1 décembre 1911.

41 Ibid.

42 Documentary evidence for the lack of any sexual division of labour in Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing is found in the following: ADN M 597 18/11 'Livrets délivrés, 1881, Tourcoing, Lille, Roubaix'; France. Résultats Statistiques du recensement des industries et professions, 29 mars 1896 (Paris, 1897); Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, rapports, Roubaix, pp. 280-92; Lille, pp. 293-303; Tourcoing, pp. 271-79, and dépositions, Syndicat des filateurs de lin, chanvre et étoupes, Lille, p. 484; Chambre Syndical des fabricants de toiles de Lille, p. 486; Léon de Seilhac, La Grève du tissage de Lille (Paris, 1910), passim; France, Statistiques des grèves, 1896, 1902, 1906, 1911; Charles Poisson, Le Salaire des femmes (Paris, 1906),pp. 21-22, 30-34.

de paix, trois cantons, Tourcoing, p. 450; M. Boulisset, inspecteur divisionnel, et Mm Herbo et Gillet, inspecteurs du travail a Lille, p. 326; J.-B. Knockaert, 'La Lutte contre le patronat textile à Tourcoing', in BS, 13 octobre 1913, who notes that the extreme piety of the Catholic patronat was deformed into an ideology designed to keep workers resigned and passive.

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43 For France see the very thorough study by Guilbert, Les Femmes.

44 M. Boulin, 'Les accidents évitables dans les filatures et dans les peignages', France. Bulletin de l'Inspection du Travail, 1913 (Paris, 1914), p. 348.

45 Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, p. 279.

46 See LT, 12 février 1893, and Aline Valette, 'La Femme dans l'usine', in LT, 3 février, 1894.

47 Wages for dévideuses are drawn from ADN M594/6 'Travail des enfants dans l'industrie, 1897-99'; Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, Tourcoing, p. 274; Lille, p. 297-8; Roubaix pp. 286, 290; France. Salaires et coût d'existence, 1906 (Paris, 1907), p. 165; Poisson, op. cit.

48 B.R. Mitchell, European Historical Statistics, p. 72.

49 These estimates may err on the side of caution. A number of reports showed that textile wages were dropping. VdP reported (9 février 1900) that a weaver who earned 35-38 francs per week in 1880 was now earning only 10-16 francs (though, as noted earlier, 1900-1901 were extremely bleak years for the textile industry). The Chambre syndicale ouvrière textile de Roubaix et environs (socialist) reported in 1904 that textile wages had fallen by

25% in the preceding quarter century. A weaver had fallen from 28-30 francs per week in 1885 to 15-16 francs per week, a spinner from 40 francs per week to 30 francs. See ADN M 625/1-3 'Rapports'. These, of course, were male wages.

50 Le Petit Jaune, 1 juin 1901 (Tourcoing) reported these figures given by M. Carémiaux, a Nord miner.

51 Mitchell, European Statistics, p. 72. BS, 6 avril 1914 reported that a director of a mill earned 36,000 fr. a year, or 115 fr. a day.

52 Despair finally led to a mass march of the unemployed textile workers of the three cities to Paris. See ADN M 616/13 'Les Sans-travail, voyage à Paris, 1901'.

53 ADN M 581/141 'Industrie textile, ouvriers tisseurs du département, enquête sur leur situation'.

54 Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, dépositions, pp. 148, 162, and p. 328, in which the Roubaix Chambre de commerce reported to the commission that unemployment was regular - during two dead seasons each year, each two months long, one in the spring, one in fall. The socialist workers' syndicat agreed, though they stated that chômage periods varied within the industry, and were rarely as regular as the patronat suggested. Thus in weaving, work stopped for about

4 months a year, in spinning, 3 months, in carding and combing, 6 months, and in dyeing and finishing, workers were only active 3½ months of the year. M. Boulisset, the work inspector for Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing, stated that long periods of unemployment were usually followed by periods of intense work. Wool, he added, was most affected by this cycle; work began in February with the arrival of the raw wool, and continued unbroken until August or September. After that, there was no work until the next year.

55 France. Résultats statistiques du recensement général de la population, 4 mars 1906, Tome I (Paris, 1907).

56 See, for example, a Nord miner's description of company stores in Le Petit Jaune, 1 juin 1901. American miners had a popular song (since rendered famous by, inter alia, Tennessee Ernie Ford...) with the refrain, "St. Peter don't call me/ 'Cause I can't go/ I owe my soul to the company store".

57 See Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, déposition, Fédération nationale des ouvriers en textiles, p. 270.

58 For a report on Tiberghien frères, Tourcoing, see CdT, 19-26 janvier 1899. For Thiriez père et fils, Lille, see Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, p. 270.

59 See AN C 3019 'Enquête des situations ouvrières,

1872-1885, pièce 36'.

60 Ibid. piece 51.

61 Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, rapport, Chambre de Commerce de Tourcoing, p. 359; déposition, Conseil des prud'hommes, p. 260.

62 Ibid., déposition, Fédération syndicale de l'industrie tourquennoise, p. 397.

63 The text of the law, passed in March 1896, read, inter alia, "...women have a right to their own earnings and the use of them"; See Proposition de loi: adoptée par la Chambre des Députés (ayant pour l'object 1e d'assurer à la femme mariée la libre disposition des fruits de son travail...), no. 47, Sénat session 1896, in collection at the Musée Social, Paris.

64 See Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, pp. 162, 328.

65 Léon et Marice Bonneff, in La Vie Tragique, pp. 37-39, estimated that of the 103,959 children working in textiles in the early years of this century, most earned between 50 centimes and 1.75 francs per day.

66 France. Salaire et Coût, op. cit.

67 Reported in CdT, 18-25 février 1888.

68 ADN M 591/1-10 'Industrie linière, 1880, Lille'.

69 Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, rapport, Fédération

textile "La Solidarité Ouvrières", Tourcoing, p. 427.

70 Pierre Pierrard, La Vie Ouvrière, p. 217.

71 Poisson, Le Salaire des femmes (Paris, 1906), p. 109.

72 Ibid. p. 201.

73 Ibid. p. 439.

74 Caroline Milhaud, L'Ouvrière, pp. 35-36, writes that this bobineuse earned 9 francs a week (and wages in Armentières were higher than in Lille, Tourcoing and Roubaix, following the successful general strike there in 1904). She had 5 children, the oldest 10, the youngest 1½. Her husband earned 12 francs/week. A neighbour cared for the two youngest children for 5 francs a week. Thus this family had 16 fr. left to live on each week. They paid 2 fr. rent, 4 fr. for bread, 3 fr. for two sacks of coal, 5 fr. for all other groceries, 2 fr. for lard, potatoes, and any 'extras'.

75 Marcelle Capy, 'Midi à la porte d'une filature', in BS, 3 avril 1914.

76 Capy, 'Filature de coton, Lille', BS, 6 avril 1914.

77 Capy, 'Mal logés, mal nourris', in BS, 16 avril 1914; Capy, 'Filature au mouillé', in BS, 26 mars 1914. Capy added, 'Anyone who thinks women are the weaker sex, and are unable to work, should visit a Lille mill... These ouvrieres, in atrocious conditions,

expend great energy. Over the years they drudge in a fog of steam...only leaving their machines when t.b. strikes them. And then - finally dry! - they lie in white wood cradles (coffins), dead, at 30'.

78 Bonneff, La Vie Tragique, p. 25.

79 Ibid., p. 31.

80 P. Brisson, Histoire du travail et des travailleurs (Paris, 1986), p. 439.

81 See ADN M 572/6-7 'Situation industrielle, 1885'; ADN M594/2 'Travail de l'industrie. Inspection, 1891. See also Georges Brennes, ouvrier cottonier, 'Simple Question - à M. le Préfet du Nord', CdT, 19-26 octobre 1888:

> La journée de travail
> Dans ce beau pays de Flandre
> Beaucoup plus longue qu'ailleurs
> Epuise les travailleurs
> Vous semblez ne pas comprendre.

82 Reported in M. Max-Albert, 'Législation ouvrières: l'inspecteur du travail en 1897', in MS, Tome 1, janvier-juin, 1899. He reported further that for all of France fines had dropped from 58,545 francs in 1896 to 39,500 in 1897 (p. 38). A report from 1906 shows the derisory level of fines in the textile industry. In that year, the Tribunal Correctionnel de Lille fined the huge Vandenburghe

spinning mill for safety violations; there were two infractions, for which the mill owners were fined 5 francs each! In comparison, a woman running a small sewing workshop in Lille was fined 100 francs for keeping her workers overtime. See France. Bulletin de l'Inspection du Travail 1906 (Paris, 1907).

83 See ADN M 594/27 'Travail de l'industrie. Inspection'. This piece is an undated, handwritten note, signed 'a group of factory workers at Fives, Lille', which complained to the Nord prefect that workers were being kept on at work through the night after completing the twelve-hour day shift. See, also, ADN M 594/6 'Le Travail des enfants dans l'industrie, 1897-99'.

84 L'Ouvrier des deux mondes, 1 avril 1897. See also the same journal for 1 juin 1897, 1 octobre 1897.

85 VdP, 20-27 avril 1900.

86 Ibid.

87 Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, déposition, Chambre Syndicale des ouvrières de l'industrie textile, p. 162. This socialist syndicat also complained that the 1892 Millerand-Colliard law resulted in the laying-off of female workers, because bosses preferred men, still legally able to work 12 hours.

88 See VdP, 20 avril 1900; Enquête sur l'industrie 1904,

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86 Ibid.

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88 See VdP, 20 avril 1900; Enquête sur l'industrie 1904,

dépositions, M. Boulisset, Mm Herbo et Gillet, inspecteurs pour Lille, Roubaix et Tourcoing, pp. 322-27.

89 See Enquête sur l'industrie, p. 326.

90 See esp. M. Max-Albert, 'Législation ouvrière', loc. cit., pp. 3-43. The author quoted a Lille inspector who pointed out that inspectors were given only 1500 francs a year to meet all expenses, which meant that they were constrained to visit all factories in an area at one time. Their visits were thus never a surprise. The Lille inspector added that the Roubaix inspector was in league with Alfred Motte. Other reports on inspectors' frustration, and patronal violations, are found in ADN M 594/3,4 'Travail dans l'industrie. Procès-verbaux 1883-92'; ADN M 594/7 'procès verbaux 1896'.

91 Caroline Milhaud, L'Ouvrière en France (Paris, 1907), p. 189.

92 In desperation, she attempted to catch these violations in one mill by sneaking up to the factory at midnight one night. "By a happy accident," she reported, "I was able to reach the factory without a signal being given. But my arrival had been anticipated. Male workers, under orders, guarded all the doors. Lights were immediately extinguished so that the 250 workers could flee." Ibid.

93 The problem of contaminated water supplies is discussed in M. Albert-Levy, 'L'Eau de boisson dans les ateliers', France. Bulletin de l'Inspection du Travail 1906 (Paris, 1907), p. 55. Details on other health conditions, as well as evidence of widespread official and unofficial concern in these years, may be found in Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, rapport de l'inspecteur départemental de Roubaix, pp. 227-29; déposition, Chambre de Commerce de Lille, p. 248; déposition, Fédération nationale des ouvriers textiles, Lilles, p. 267; déposition, M. Broquart, juge de paix de Tourcoing, p. 447; rapport, l'inspecteur de travail, Tourcoing, p. 448; M. Leclerc de Puligny, 'Les conditions d'hygiène dans les filatures de lin', in France. Bulletin de l'Inspection du Travail 1903 (Paris 1904) p. 230; M. P. Bellon, 'Le dépouissiérage des carederies de coton', in France, Bulletin, 1906, p. 432; Conférence internationale pour la protection ouvrière, à Bern, 8-17 mai 1905', in France. Bulletin, 1906, p. 212; M. Boulin, La Ventilation des cardes à laine', Bulletin 1906, p. 261; M. P. Bellon, 'L'Assainaissement des atmosphères confinées (textiles)', Bulletin de l'Office du Travail 1911 (Paris 1912), p. 410; M. Boulin, 'Les conditions d'hygiène dans les filatures de laine de la région de Fourmies', ibid.,

p. 93; Caroline Milhaud, op. cit., pp. 41-42; M. J.P. Langlois, 'Etude physiologique expérimentale sur le travail aux milieux chauds et humides', Bulletin 1914, p. 263; M. Magnier, 'Note sur un appareil de dépouissiérage des cardes à coton', Bulletin 1912, p. 322; P. Brisson, Histoire du Travail, op. cit., p. 443.

94 See V. Vandeputte, 'Dans le textile', VdP, 7-14 juillet 1912. He reports on the 1904 legislation prescribing workroom space, and notes patronal indifference to these and other laws.

95 Marcelle Capy, 'Drames au travail', BS, 17 avril 1914. She reports both the appalling health conditions of the textile mills of Lille and Roubaix, and recounts stories of accidents as told to her by women workers. Scalpings occurred, they told her, when, just before closing, the tired women combed some of the dust and debris from their long hair. The machines continued to run while they did this, and careless workers sometimes lost their hair.

96 See Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, rapport de l'Inspecteur a Roubaix, p. 227; rapport de l'Inspecteur du Travail à Tourcoing, p. 449. See also Léon and Maurice Bonneff, La Vie Tragique, op. cit., pp. 34-36. They note that all the toilets they saw in textile mills in 1914 were open air. Women going out to use

them, or going home, froze. They added that 'the most striking feature' of women who worked in the mills was their anaemia. In wet-spinning mills, they noted, work inspectors found 1,745 anaemics for every 4,166 spinners and rattacheuses (about 42%). Also, they argued that at least 14.3% of Nord textile ouvrières had respiratory problems, as did some 54.5% of linen or cotton dévideuses. The great majority of these women were aged between 13 and 35. After 35, they died or stopped working (see p. 36). Maternity problems are discussed in A. Vallin, La Femme salariée et la maternité (Paris, 1911), p. 32.

97 Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, déposition, Fédération nationale des ouvriers en textile, p. 267.

98 See M. Prouvost, Inspecteur a Roubaix, 'Peigneurs de laine à Roubaix', in AN F12 4938 'Hygiène et sanitation'.

99 See Chapter 2.

100 Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, rapport de M. le Ministre du commerce et de l'industrie, p. 47 (which lists the dangerous industries and shows that there were - for France as a whole - 24.9 accidents per year for every 1000 textile workers, compared to 186.6/1000 for metallurgical workers).

101 For complaints about patronal indifference, as well as the effects of piece rate pay, see 'Note sur les accidents occasionnés par le nettoyage et le graissage en marche dans les ateliers de préparation de fils de laine peigné', in France. Bulletin de l'Office du Travail 1910 (Paris, 1911), p. 188; Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, rapport, juges de paix de Tourcoing, p. 450; 'Tribunal correctionnel de Lille, juin 1904', in France. Bulletin de l'Inspection du Travail 1904 (Paris 1905), p. 219, (this reports the conviction of a Roubaix weaving-mill owner who had allowed a supervisor to order a 12-year old to clean her (running) machine. She crushed her right hand. Perhaps because of the girl's youth the boss received the unusually stiff fine of 115 francs.); and M. Boulin, 'Les accidents évitables dans les filatures et dans les peignages', in France. Bulletin de l'Inspection du Travail 1913 (Paris 1914), p. 339.

102 See Boulin, ibid., p. 342.

103 'Notes sur les accidents', loc. cit., p. 188.

104 In 1885, there were four reported accidents in one month of Tourcoing. Two men, 32 and 40, were, in the words of the reporting patron, "heavily wounded". One lost the fingers of his right hand. Two women, 20 and 21, were also injured; one mashed her fingers,

the other lost part of her right hand. The mill owners listed two causes: imprudence, and carelessness on the part of the workers. In the 1880s, no compensation was paid to injured workers unless they could prove employer negligence. The lack of any legal restrictions on the owners' use and deployment of machines and workers meant that few workers could demonstrate such negligence.

In 1899, in one month, 34 ouvrières (whose ages ranged from 12 to 33) were injured in the three cities. Together they lost an average of 22.5 days of work each. (When one recalls that these women normally returned to work about 10 days after giving birth, it is clear that these injuries must have been serious indeed.) Most of these 34 women had caught their hands in their weaving machines. The second most frequent accident involved falling - into the gears of a machine, or from a high platform to the floor - caused by the slippery, wet, debris-covered surfaces in the workrooms.
If this monthly figure represented an average for the entire year, then 408 ouvrières, out of a total of about 30,000 (or 1.36%) were seriously injured in 1899.

The Roubaix work inspector reported that in his city alone in 1902 there were 2,133 "reported" (emphasis his) accidents, resulting in 5 deaths

and 59 permanent disabilities. In addition, 2,066 injuries resulted in a minimum of 4 days away from the mills. Three had "unknown consequences'. Of the wounded, 240 were boys (under 18), 123, girls, 284, women, and 1,486 men. Thus 407 ouvrières were injured in that year - only one less than in 1899.

A few years later, in 1911-12, the three cities of Roubaix, Wattrelos (a neighbouring textile town), and Tourcoing reported a combined total of 14,980 injuries. Of these, 1,948 were boys, 1,069, girls, 2,230, women, and 9,733 men. In Lille alone, in the same period, there were an additional 31,168 injuries - including 4,519 boys, 2,599 girls, 5,375 women, and 18,675 men. Again, the majority of the wounded had sustained crushed fingers or hands.

See ADN M 572/6-7 'Situation industrielle, 1885, accidents, août 1885'; ADN M 614/14 'Accidents du travail, procès-verbaux des accidents survenus, juin 1899'; Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, rapport de l'Inspecteur départemental, Roubaix, p. 26; M. Boulin, 'Les accidents évitables', loc. cit., p. 348.

105 See Marcelle Capy's description of women wet-spinners' work in 'Filature au mouillé', in BS, 26 mars 1914.

106 Boulin, op. cit., p. 348.

107 Ibid., p. 349. Marcelle Capy, in 'Visite d'une filature d'étoupe', (31 mars 1914 in BS) remarked that women textile workers did drink. Gin was their preference, and they - like male textile workers - believed it chased the dust from their lungs.

108 Boulin, op. cit., p. 348. In 1912, Boulin received a letter from women in a Roubaix spinning mill. It read: "More and more, ouvrières are forced to clean running machines. To assure yourself that this is true, it is necessary to visit at 11 a.m. or 5 p.m.; it doesn't matter what day." Boulin sent an inspector, who found the complaint to be justified. Furthermore, it was a female supervisor who had ordered the cleaning.

109 Le Petit Jaune, 7 novembre 1902. See also Boulin, op. cit., p. 243.

Chapter 4

1 For the ineffectiveness of protective legislation elsewhere in French industries, see Marcel Laurent, 'L'Enfer des raffineries', BS, 14 mai 1913; Capy, 'Les Femmes à l'usine: les esclaves de "La Vigneronne"', BS, 4 septembre 1913; 'Une Ouvrière blessée à l'usine Meunier', BS, 24 septembre 1913;

'La Lampe Osram', BS, 29 septembre 1913; 'Terrible accident dans un atelier des femmes', BS, 6 janvier 1914.

2 The workers' press is full of descriptions of patronal attempts to discipline the industrial workforce. Two accounts of such discipline directed at women are found in Marcelle Capy, 'La Femme à l'atelier - exploitation et espionage', in BS, 25 août 1913, which details the spying system in the Printemps department store in Paris, and Capy, 'L'Usine de la Lampe Osram', in ibid., 30 septembre, 3 octobre, 4, 5, et 6 octobre 1913. The discipline at this factory was, in Capy's words, 'Taylorism in all its horrors'.

3 See Bonneff, La Vie tragique, p.42 and Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, déposition, Fédération nationale des ouvriers textiles, p. 288; rapport, Chambre de Commerce, Tourcoing, p. 359; déposition, Chambre de Commerce, Roubaix, p. 160.

4 See Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, déposition, Syndicat de la filature, Tourcoing, p. 437.

5 Marcelle Capy described this contract-signing process in 'L'Usine de la lampe Osram'. Too often, illiterate workers were not read these rules. Those who could read, furthermore, were usually rushed through the

process so that they had little chance to read all the rules.

6 AN F12 4660 March 1882. Ouvriers and ouvrières were not the only employees so harshly disciplined. Rules for a Tourcoing factory in 1880, rules applying only to the white-collar workforce, were no less strict. These rules also included religious strictures: employees were required to pray and show their high moral character at all times. They, too, had only outdoor lavatories, though their were separate from the toilets of the ouvrières. These rules are found in Jacques, Dumortier, Le Syndicat patronal textile de Roubaix-Tourcoing de 1942 à 1972 (Lille, 1975), Annexe VIII, p. 233.

7 This favoured workers system is described in Enquête sur l'industrie, 1904, déposition, Fédération nationale des ouvriers textiles, Lille, p. 288.

8 See Marcelle Capy, 'Filature de lin. Dernières manipulations', BS, 29 mars, 1914.

9 Capy, 'Filature du coton', BS, 6 avril 1914.

10 Capy, 'Filature au mouillé', BS, 26 mars 1914.

11 As reported in LT, 8 février 1893.

12 Capy, 'Filature du coton', loc. cit.

13 Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, déposition, Fédération nationale des ouvriers textiles, p. 270.

14 Capy, 'Filature au mouillé', loc. cit.

15 'Chez Pollet (Lille)', CdT, 31 juillet - 6 août 1887. Reports appeared throughout 1887 and 1888. See also notes 243-48.

16 LT, 16 mai 1894.

17 Quoted in M. l'Abbé Talmy, L'Association catholique des patrons du Nord 1884-1895: Une forme hybride du catholicisme social en France (Lille, 1962), p. 21.

18 Reported in CdT, 3 juillet - 6 août 1887.

19 CdT, 2-9 octobre 1887.

20 CdT, 18-25 février 1888.

21 See Ibid., 2-9 octobre 1887, 1-8 janvier 1888, 18-25 février 1888.

22 Ibid., 18-25 février 1888.

23 Ibid., 2-9 octobre 1887.

24 Scattered reports on mixed and yellow syndicats are to be found in ADN M 596/68 'Syndicats professionals, Tourcoing'; ADN M 596/2 'Syndicats professionels 1899'; ADN M 596/66 'Syndicats professionels 1903'; ADN M 596/69 'Syndicats professionels 1908'; AN F7 12793 'Syndicats jaunes'; Maurice Petitcollet, Les Syndicats ouvriers de l'industrie textile dans l'arrondissement de Lille (Paris 1907).

25 Evidence of the commonality of such knowledge is found in the repeated, strident protestations to the contrary in Le Petit Jaune from 1901 to 1911.

26 Le Petit Jaune, 14 mai 1901.

27 See Le Petit Jaune, 1901-1911, and esp. 'Dans un ménage ouvrier', 1 novembre 1901.

28 Ibid., 9 janvier 1902.

29 Talmy, op. cit., p. 106.

30 Léon de Seilhac, La Grève du tissage de Lille (Paris 1910), pp. 43-44.

31 ADN M 596/2 'Rapport, 16 mars 1893, au Ministère du commerce et de l'industrie'.

32 Talmy, op. cit., p. 110.

33 Ibid., p. 33 and Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, déposition, Syndicat des ouvriers de l'industrie textile, Roubaix, p. 173.

34 See France. Les Associations professionelles ouvrières. Office du Travail (Paris, 1901), pp. 375-404.

35 Pierre Pierrard, La Vie Ouvrière à Lille sous le Second Empire (Paris, 1965) p. 412.

36 CdT, 18-25 février 1888.

37 See note 33.

38 Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, déposition, Fédération nationale des ouvriers en textile, Lille, p. 272.

39 Bonneff, La Vie Tragique, pp. 41-42.

40 'La Religion, aide à l'exploitation', VdP, 4-11 novembre 1906.

41 A picture of one 'image' at a Lille spinning mill is provided in Pierre Pierrard, Lille et les Lillois, op. cit., between pp. 186-187.

42 Quoted in Talmy, Les Associations, p. 106.

43 Marcelle Capy, 'Quelques réflexions', BS, 20 avril 1914.

44 'La Réligion, aide à l'exploitation.'

Chapter 5

1 George LeFranc, Le Mouvement syndical sous la troisième république. Paris, 1967, p. 106.

2 Ibid.

3 See a brief description of these jaunes, pp. 111-113, supra. It is interesting to note that these supposedly independent unions have left a pejorative legacy. 'Jaune' is defined in one recent French-English dictionary as 'non-union workman; blackleg, scab'. See J.E. Mansion-Harrapp's Shorter French and English Dictionary, London, 1967, p. J:2.

4 AN F^7 12793, 'Syndicats jaunes'.

5 In France, Office du Travail. Les Associations professionnelles ouvrières, Tome II, Paris 1901, pp. 375-404, the only yellow union cited is Roubaix's l'Union syndicale des vrais travailleurs de l'industrie textile, founded in 1893 by l'abbé Bataille in response to the growing power of the local Parti Ouvrier. It reported 1,000 members in 1895, but vanished shortly thereafter.

6 See ADN M596-68 'Syndicats professionnels, Tourcoing', AN F^{7}12793 'Syndicats jaunes'.

7 Maurice Petitcollet, Les Syndicats ouvriers de l'industrie textile dans l'arrondissement Lille (n.p., n.d.), pp. 65-67.

8 Ibid., p. 103.

9 Ibid., p. 136.

10 ADN M596 68 'Syndicats professionnels, Tourcoing'; ADN M596 66 'Etat des syndicats'; ADN M596 69 'Etat des Syndicats' all contain fragments of evidence about the participation of women in syndicats jaunes.

11 Jacques Dumortier. Le Syndicat Patronal textile de Roubaix-Tourcing de 1942 à 1972, Lille, 1975, p. 28.

12 Georges Lefranc, in Mouvement syndical, p. 123 claims that Christian syndicalism was particularly anxious to recruit women. A similar belief in

women's religious predilections is cited by Pieroni Bortolotti Franca, in 'Femminismo e socialismo dal 1900 al primo dopo guerra', Critica Storica, 1 (31 Gennaio 1969) p. 29, and by Theodore Zeldin, Ambition and Love, _____, Oxford 1979 p. 345. It is true that the Church and the textile patronat directed special religious pressures toward female textile workers. One must not, however, assume that the result was to make them more 'religious' than the men.

13 See pp. 111-113, supra.

14 Les Associations professionnelles ouvrières, pp. 375-404; ADN M596 68; Jacques Dumortier, Le Syndicat Patronal; M. l'abbé Talmy, L'Association catholoique des patrons du Nord, 1884-1895, Lille, 1962, pp. 155ff; ADN 596 2 'Syndicats professionnelles, 1889, rapport, Ministère du Commerce' reports that mixed syndicats had virtually no economic or professional influence.

15 Compère-Morel, et al., Encyclopédie socialiste, Syndicale et Cooperative de l'Internationale ouvrière, Paris, 1913, Tome 2, pp. 399-400, and Les Associations professionnelles, pp. 375-404.

16 Talmy, 'L'Association catholique', p. 103.

17 Compère-Morel, Encyclopédie.

18 ADN M596 2 'Syndicats professionnels, Janvier 1891'.

19 Compère-Morel, Encyclopédie.

20 Les Associations professionnelles.

21 ADN M596 2 'Syndicats'.

22 Ibid.

23 Lefranc, 'Le Mouvement syndical', p. 21

24 Ibid., p. 137.

25 Madeleine Guilbert, Les Femmes et l'organisation syndicale avant 1914, Paris, 1966.

26 Les Associations professionnelles.

27 Maurice Petitcollet, Les Syndicats, pp. 66-7.

28 AN F^7 13820, 'Syndicats'

29 Petitcollet, Les Syndicats, p. 65.

30 Ibid.

31 ADN M596 68 'Syndicats professionnels, Tourcoing'.

32 Guilbert, Les Femmes, has shown this to be true throughout France in this period. See pp. 32-33, 35, 39.

33 Other historians of women and trade unions have made this same point. See Jill Liddington and Jill Norris, One Hand Tied Behind Us, London, 1978
Sheila Lewenhak, 'Trade Union Membership among Women and Girls in the U.K., 1920-1965', Ph.D. London, 1971,

Leslie Woodcock Tentler, Wage-earning Women, Oxford, 1979, Norbert Soldon, Women in British Trade Unions, 1874-1976, Dublin, 1978, Marie-Hélène Zylberberg-Hocquard, Féminisme et syndicalisme en France, Paris, 1978.

34 See Marilyn Boxer, 'Foyer or Factory: Working-class Women in 19th Century France', Proceedings of the Second Meeting of the Western Society for French History, 21-23 November 1974, Austin, Texas, 1975, pp. 192-203.

35 Louise Tilly and Joan Scott, Women, Work, and Family, New York, 1978.

36 Auguste Pawlowski, Les Syndicats féminins et les syndicats mixtes en France, Paris, 1912, p. 8.

37 Some of the mixed syndicats, which encouraged members to join Catholic cercles such as St. Joseph and Notre Dame de l'Usine, were openly religious. At the end of the 1880s, two of the largest mixed textile syndicats, the Syndicat de l'industrie tourquennoise, and the Syndicat de l'industrie roubaissienne, counted 4,064 members of both sexes. See Pawlowski, Syndicats, p. 111.

38 See l'Ouvrier des deux mondes, 1 novembre 1897, which describes the appeal of one local umbrella group for mixed syndicats thus: "Pour être embauché

dans les usines de Roubaix et de Tourcoing, il faut aujourd'hui que le travaileur soit inscrit sur les listes de l'Union". This group's statutes proclaimed that its function was to find work for its worker members. In cities without bourses du Travail, and with increasing unemployment, this job-location service was an important consideration.

39 Pawlowski, Syndicats, p. 111.

40 France. Office du Travail. Les Associations professionnelles ouvrières, tome II, Paris, 1901, pp. 482-3.

41 Georges Lefranc, in Mouvement Syndical, pp. 109-24 dismisses the jaunes as not legitimate workers' unions. Madeleine Guilbert, in Les Femmes et le syndicalisme avant 1914, Paris, 1966, omits them altogether. Yves Lequin finally, in Les Ouvriers de la Région Lyonnaise 1848-1914, 2 vols., Lyon, 1977, also argues for a similar view of jaunes in the Lyon area in this period, although he specifically excludes the genuinely independent women's Christian syndicats. See volume 2.

42 Sometimes during major strikes workers in jaunes joined with 'reds' to form what were called 'syndicats verts' by press and participants alike. Such strike unity is discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, infra.

43 Léon de Seilhac, La Grève du tissage de Lille, Paris, 1909, p. 41.

44 For reports of this group see Le Petit Jaune, septembre-octobre, 1903, PJ, 15 août, 1904, and AN F^7 12793, 'Syndicats Jaunes', Rapport de congrès des syndicats indépendents des femmes, Lyon, July, 1906. Unlike Yves Lequin, the government thus included these women's syndicats among the jaunes.

45 See Jean Maitron, ed., Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier français, tome XV, troisième partie: 1871-1914, Paris, 1977, p. 74.

46 AN F^7 12793, 'Syndicats Jaunes', Statutes.

47 Auguste Pawlowski, p. 17.

48 Ibid.

49 L.M. Compain, La Femme dans les organisations ouvrières, Paris, 1910, p. 62.

50 AN F^7 12793 'Syndicats Jaunes'.

51 ADN M154 39 'Partis politiques. Deuxième conférence ouvrières, Tourcoing, 25 février 1894.

52 ADN M154 37, 38 'Partis politiques socialistes'

53 ADN M154 74 'Partis politiques socialistes', Notice à police, Tourcoing, février, 1902.

54 PJ, janvier 1908, 'Comment il convient d'éduquer les enfants'.

55 PJ, 8 août 1901.

56 AN F^7 12793 'Syndicats Jaunes'.

57 This optimistic figure was arrived at by accepting the jaunes' own declaration that there were 1800 female members of Tourcoing's l'Union fédérale - or 3/5's of the total membership of 3000.

58 PJ reported prices in its cooperatives in each issue of the paper. Prices for necessities (e.g. coal, milk, bread) were similar to those charged by socialist cooperatives. But interestingly, the yellow's co-ops also sold chocolate, figs, raisins and other luxury items - a fact which suggested that the membership may have included many supervisors. Few ordinary workers had room for such items in tight budgets.

59 One complaint about socialist workers' pressure on non-socialist co-workers is found in PJ, 22 mai 1903. See also ADN M596 68 'Syndicats professionels, Tourcoing', which includes a statement of purpose from a women's group - L'Espérance du Tissage de Tourcoing - that claims to be against "leaders who are interested in agitation" - i.e. socialists.

60 Maurice Petitcollet, Les Syndicats ouvriers, (n.p., n.d.), pp. 66-7.

61 Léon de Seilhac, La Grève du tissage de Lille, Paris, 1910, p. 40.

62 Louise-Marie Compain, in La Femme dans les organisations ouvrières, Paris, 1910, states that women in socialist syndicats got the same indemnity - 15 fr. a week - as men got. See p. 63.

63 Petitcollet, Les Syndicats, pp. 66-7.

64 This was, for example, the major demand of the socialist syndicats in the 1904 Parliamentary enquiry. See Enquête sur l'industrie, pp. 274, 297-8, 286, 290.

65 France. Office du Travail. 'Les Associations professionnelles ouvrières', Paris, 1901, p. 383. See also ADN M595 10 i, 'Syndicats-Généralités', which includes statutes of the Chambre syndicale

des ouvriers tisserands. Number 10 allowed women to speak in meetings, but only with the prior approval of the chairman. If this was refused, women could write their comments and ask two male members to read them out. The statutes of the Chambre syndicale des fileurs et rattacheurs de lain et coton de Roubaix had a similar statute (number 5). These are found in ADN M595 10 ii, 'Chambres syndicales, dossiers par commune, 1880s'.

66 'Les Associations professionnelles', p. 383.

67 See inter alia, Le Forçat, 24 septembre 1882, 22 avril 1883, 4 mars 1883.

68 See Jules Guesde and Paul Lafargue, Le Programme du Parti ouvrier, Paris, 1883.

69 LF, 4 mars 1883.

70 Found in ADN M596 68 'Syndicats professionnels de Tourcoing'.

71 Compain, La Femme, p. 63.

72 These arguments flourished following the Couriau affair of 1913, discussed in Chapter 11. See the CGT's VdP and BS, and H from autumn 1913 to the outbreak of war.

73 See, inter alia, Compte-rendu, Conférence. Syndicat ouvrier des peigneurs de lin, cotonniers, tisserands et filtiers, 15 mai 1882. The meeting was called to

protest forced religious observances in the textile mills. Léonie Rouzade spoke on 'De la femme au XIX^{e} siècle'. In July of that year, a similar meeting featured Rouzade speaking on that topic. It was reported in LF, 29 juillet, 1882. Louise Michel spoke on working women's problems in October. (See LF, 29 octobre 1882), and Paule Mink followed suit in November (LF, 26 novembre 1882). These are examples from only one year, but such meetings continued through the 1880s.

74 Discussed in Chapter 4.

75 Compain, La Femme, p. 64.

76 This view of Flemish sociability is not shared by Robert Baker. In 'A Regional Study of Working Class Organisation in France: Socialism in the Nord, 1870-1924', Ph.D., Stanford, 1967, Baker concluded that "The textile worker remained a man (sic) who was often suspicious of large groups...", (p. 237). The mass strikes of 1880, 1890, 1904-5 and 1909 suggest otherwise, as does Maxence Van der Meersch's Quand les sirènes se taisent, Paris, 1933.

77 ADN M 154 62, 'Partis politiques-socialistes 1870-1897' includes a clipping from Le Temps, 4 avril 1884, reporting a meeting to be held 'chez Carette', "pour l'organisation d'un groupe de femmes'. See also Comptes-rendu. 7^{e} congrès national du Parti

ouvrier, Roubaix, 29 mars - 7 avril 1884, Lille, 1885.

78 See LT, 8 mars 1893 and ADN M595 33 'Syndicats. Généralites et Correspondance, 1866-1901' which includes a report of this group's 'concert-conference' in an estaminet, which ended with a resolution to organise new women's groups.

79 'L'Epeule' was the name of one Roubaix quartier. See LT, 18 avril 1893.

80 Ibid., 6 mai 1893. Ste. Elisabeth was a quartier.

81 Fontenoy was another quartier. See LT, 26 septembre 1894.

82 Ibid., 1 août 1893 and 12 aout 1893. At the 12e national congrès du POF, Nantes, 1894, Roubaix's delegation included representatives from L'Emancipation, La Revanche des femmes, le Droit des femmes, and les Femmes socialistes de Fonetnoy. See Comptes-rendu, Lille, 1895.

83 LT, 11 janvier 1893. All that is known about Marie Devernay is that she was Gustave Delory's sister. He was Lille's socialist mayor in 1896. Claude Willard (in Les Guesdistes, Paris, 1965, p. 619) described her husband, Gustave Devernay, as 'one of the organisers, with his wife, of the Comité des femmes of Lille', and as being so 'brutal' and 'intemperate' that he was often threatened with

expulsion from the party. As Delory and his wife, as well as both the Delory parents, were textile workers, it is likely that Marie Devernay was as well, at least at some time in her life. (See also Willard, pp. 616-17.)

84 LT, 15 août 1894 reported the congrès régional de la Libre-pensée at Dorignies, where citoyennes Libert and Leclerq were Lille delegates. A discussion of the role of local Libre-pensée groups in the development of socialism in this area is found in Robert Pierreuse, 'L'Ouvrier roubaisien et la propagande politique, 1890-1900', Revue du Nord, no. 201, (avril-juin 1969), pp. 249-73. A further report of women's participation in such groups is found in CdT, 16 février 1890.

85 As in ADN M 154 73, 'Police politique politique. Propagande socialiste. Rapports 1900'. This includes a report of a Lille Parti ouvrier meeting on 15 mars 1897, which is described as an attempt to revive the Fédération feminine lilloise which was founded - according to this mistaken police informer - by Laura Lafargue.

86 LT, 3 décembre 1892, announced an organisational meeting to be held at the estaminet L'Harmonie, in Lille. LT, 3 janvier 1893, 11 octobre 1893 and 24 janvier 1894 offered more announcements of such

meetings, the latter including a number of them.

87 LT, 10 janvier 1894.

88 Ibid., 26 septembre 1894. See also Comptes-rendu, 12e congrès national du Parti ouvrier français, Nantes, 14-16 septembre 1894, Lille, 1895, which shows in addition to the 4 Roubaix women's groups already noted, Le Groupe des femmes socialistes from Deville-les-Rouen.

89 Comptes-rendu, 15e congrès national du Parti ouvrier français, Paris, 10-13 juillet, 1897, Lille, 1898.

90 ADN M154 73 'Police politique. Propagande socialiste. Rapports, 1900.

91 FS, 'Appel aux femmes socialistes de Lille', 15 avril 1913 and 20 juillet 1913.

92 When Laura Lafargue wrote to Engels about visiting Lille, and being met by women's groups, she described them as "a lot of citoyennes'. (See Emile Bolligelli, ed., Correspondance. Friedrich Engels, Paul et Laura Lafargue, Tome III, 1891-95, Paris, 1959, the letter dated 22 novembre 1891, p. 132.) This numbering was typical.

Chapter 6

1 AN F^{12} 4660 'Grèves et Coalitions 1880-81', rapport, 8 janvier 1880.

2 Le Temps, 23 mai 1880.

3 AN F^{12} 4660, 'Grèves et coalitions 1880-81'.

4 Ibid. 'Grève à Roubaix-Lille, 29 avril 1880'.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid. Télégramme au ministère des postes et télégraphes, Lille, 5 mai 1880. It is interesting to note that the prefect, who represented the Third Republic, did not see the state's interests as necessarily identical to those of the local bourgeoisie.

7 The point that both sexes were involved at all levels of the strike is emphasised here because of the popularity of the view that women viewed themselves primarily in their domestic roles - a view which then prevented their participation in public activities. Numerous historiographical references have already been made, but I shall add two here. Laura Struminghier, in Women and the Making of the Working Class: Lyon, 1830-1870, Montreal, 1979, argues that women proved a barrier to the development of class consciousness because their primary focus

was on the domestic concerns of the 'separate sphere'. One reviewer, Mary Lynn McDougall (in 'Review', American Historical Review, Vol. 85, No. 3, June 1980, p. 640) points out that Strumingher's evidence proves the opposite case; that is, that female spinners in, e.g. 1848, saw themselves primarily as paid workers, rather than housewives. The fact that Strumingher has not recognised the implications of her own research suggests the strength of the 'sexual division of politics' myth.

8 AN F^{12} 4660 'Grèves et coalitions, 1880-81', 7 mai 1880, rapport de l'armée au ministère de guerre.

9 'Cabinet du Préfet du Nord. Lille. 1 Juin 1880. Histoire de la Grève'.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 From Le Gaulois, 20 mai 1880, quoted in Michelle Perrot, 'Les Ouvriers en grève', Paris, 1974, p. 550.

16 See Le Temps, 23 mai 1880.

17 Quoted in Perrot, Les Ouvriers, p. 546. A description of violence done to the munificent houses of the patronat appears on pp. 560ff.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Olwen Hufton, in 'Women in Revolution, 1789-1796', Past and Present, 53 (1971), pp. 90-108, describes these 18th century rural crowds.

21 The report of this 1890 strike, called 'Tisseurs de Roubaix', is found in France. Office du Travail. Les Associations professionnelles ouvrières, Tome II, Paris 1891, pp. 375-404 reports a number of new members to the red syndicat of Roublaix, Tourcoing-Wattrelos (3,427 members) and 200 to the evanescent independent syndicat, l'Union Ouvrière (which vanished in 1891), but points out that women were reluctant to join because of discriminatory rules.

22 From the first, the official line of the POF was in favour of women's legal equality and an equal right to work at any job at equal wages.

23 See Michelle Perrot, 'Les Ouvriers en grève', Paris, 1974, p. 113 for the argument that spring brought ex-peasants, now workers, out on strike.

24 See Aline Valette, 'Une Journée historique - Le 1e mai 1890 en France', RS, Tome XII (juillet-déc. 1890), pp. 129-55, 433-48, esp. p. 152. Valette states that workers' petitions to Parlement from Parisian workers demanded the 8-hour day, as did one from Lille. In reality, however, the textile workers only wanted a 10-hour day, which they were still demanding in the 1904 Parliamentary inquiry.

25 Ibid., p. 152.

26 Ibid., p. 444.

27 CdT, 4 mai 1890.

28 Valette, 'Une Journée', p. 152.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid., p. 441. The Roubaix-Tourcoing figure is probably high, although CdT reported 15,000 strikers on May 4, 1890. The government's figures followed the usual pattern by varying wildly. In Les Associations professionnelles ouvrières on article, 'Tisseurs de Roubaix' reported 21,700 strikers in Roubaix alone (p. 375). A second official source, the Statistiques des grèves 1890 (France. Office du Travail, Paris 1891) recorded only 1,265 strikers in Roubaix! This latter report, which noted the strike's only demand as the 10-hour day, brings the reliability of this evidence into serious question.

31 Claude Willard, Les Guesdistes, Paris, 1965, p. 45.

32 It seems likely that the Republic's abandonment of them, apparent when the prefect called in troops to defend the property of the patronat, had a serious effect on the workers' attitudes in this strike, and helped turn a one-day walkout into something more serious. Michelle Perrot argues that workers' disillunionment with the state occurred only after the 1891 Mayday 'massacre' at Fourmies, but it seems clear that it had its beginnings earlier. The relations between the state and the French industrial working class is an interesting topic not adequately studied.

33 Perrot, in Les Ouvriers, notes that 'Après une telle journée de griserie et de gloire, le retour à l'usine, le renfermement, les horaires, la cloche, la hargne des contre-maîtres, parraissent insurmontables'. p. 99.

34 CdT, 4 mai 1890.

35 Perrot, Les Ouvriers, p. 99.

36 CdT, 4 mai 1890. Perrot, in ibid., offers two numbers of strikers - 35,000 (p. 99) and 75,000 (p. 565) - without noting the discrepancy. It is probably explained by a confusion between those on strike in Roubaix proper and those on strike in the

area (including Tourcoing, and its suburbs of Wattrelos, La Madeleine, Hellemes, Lannoy, Roncq, and Neuvilly). Thus if the 40,000 on strike in the Tourcoing area are added to the 35,000 on strike in Roubaix, one reaches Perrot's second figure.

37 CdT, 11 mai 1890.

38 Ibid.

39 This event is also described in Robert Baker, 'A Regional Study of Working Class Organisation in France', Ph.D. Stanford University, 1967, pp. 58-9.

40 Quoted in Perrot, Les Ouvriers, p. 99.

41 Ibid., p. 581. Perrot's analysis of violence in strikes is found on pp. 576-87. She argues that attacks on the homes of the patronat were similar to those against seigneurial mansions - 'remnants', in other words, of feudal rebellion. It seems more plausible to assume that such attacks on the evidence of patronal wealth were as rational as attacks on the mills, particularly when those palatial houses were built so near the squalid courées of the workers.

42 The close ties between the two parties in the Lille arrondissement, apparent to anyone reading the local socialist press, have not been studied. The effects of Belgian socialist methods and ideas on the Guesdists in the Nord thus remain unclear.

43 1890 was, in fact, a fairly good year in the industry.

44 See Chapter 1.

45 See inter alia reports in CdT, 1-11 mai, 1890.

46 CdT, 11 mai 1890.

47 See Baker, 'A Regional Study', pp. 58-9.

48 Valette, in 'Une Journée', quoted one patron

> Les industriels de Roubaix, non moins désireux que les ouvriers d'arriver à la diminution des heures de travailm mais ne pouvant appliquer cette mésure qu'après une entente internationale, demandent que le gouvernement prenne au plus tôt l'initiative de cette réglementation' (pp. 441-2).

49 Ibid.

50 CdT., 4 mai 1890, 11 mai 1890.

51 Valette, 'Une Journée', p. 443.

52 Perrot, in Les Ouvriers, accepts the socialists' estimates. See note 36 supra.

53 Valette, 'Une Journée', p. 446.

54 Ibid.

55 France. Office du Travail. 'Les Associations professionnelles', p. 380.

56 CdT, 11 mai, 1890.

57 The often-quoted comment of Jules Guesde that Valette was 'la seule femme qui ait compris le socialisme' gives some sense of how unique she was. Willard

lists her, along with only two other women (Paule Mink and Marguerite Dupris-Verecque) as a 'militant guesdiste'. Les Guesdistes, pp. 603-51.

58 Valette, 'Une Journée', p. 129.

Chapter 7

1 See Enquête sur l'industrie 1904, 'Extraits du rapport de juge de paix au canton Roubaix-Nord', p. 218, and reports of some such small defensive strikes in LT, 3 decembre 1892.

2 Ibid., and LT, 11 janvier 1893. Women's militance in the face of such discipline found a voice in songs like this one, protesting the hiring of a new director from Lyon:

> M. Joseph, le porc-épic
> Retournez à votre boutique
> Il ne faut pas essayer
> De combattre l'ouvrier.
>
> Faites-attention buveur du sang
> De ne pas ?re si tyran (illegible source)
> Car les femmes à main-levee
> Ont juré de vous dompter
> Les choses en sont là.
>
> (Le Travailleur, 18 janvier 1893)

3 See Ibid., 18 octobre 1893.

4 Lafargue had been elected deputy from Lille in 1891.

5 It is interesting to note that Lafargue's frequent letters to Engels made no mention of this event.

See Emile Bottigelli, Correspondance, Tome III, 1891-1895, Paris 1959, pp. 322-23, 338-40.

6 Almost no women in the textile industry held waged jobs by 1893, so that this rise is insignificant.

7 The POF took the position that reform should come about by electing socialists to public office. Strikes, in Guesde's view, wasted energy needed for the class struggle.

8 LT, 11 janvier 1893.

9 See ibid., 15 janvier, 18 janvier, 21 janvier 1893. Throughout February, LT continued to report 'mass' meetings of women, sponsored by various sub-groups of the Comité des femmes.

10 Note, for example, the large disparity between figures offered in the press for the 1890 strike and those in the Statistiques des grèves.

11 Thus, prefects wanted to demonstrate their capacity to control industrial unrest. Owners hoped to avoid the Republic's intervention which might bring work inspectors. Further, the mill owners were not anxious to gain a reputation for employing a restive workforce, who would interrupt the supply of goods on order.

12 All figures are taken from France. Office du Travail. Statistiques des grèves, 1896, 1902, 1906 et 1911.

13 The emphasis on wages in women's strikes does not jibe with other historians' generalisations about women's strikes in this period. See, e.g., Madeleine Guilbert, Les Femmes et l'organisation syndicale avant 1914, Paris, 1966, p. 224. It probably reflects the special problems of workers in a seriously depressed industry. Male emphasis on 'personal' issues may reflect their greater degree of organisation, in the Lille area, with its concomitant belief that such grievances might be redressed. Too, it could reflect men's higher wages, which meant that their grievances could include a greater variety of things.

14 I hope the arguments of historians like William Reddy (in 'Family and Factory: French Linen Weavers in the Belle Epoque', Journal of Social History 8 (winter, 1975), pp. 102-12) are now dead enought not to require further flogging, but I cannot resist highlighting the fact that women workers in the Lille area were not merely following the lead of men or reacting hysterically to emotional - i.e. personal - issues when they struck. Given the Nord statistics, one might more readily argue that men struck for emotional reasons.

15 These conclusions are all based on figures given in the Statistiques des grèves, 1896, 1902, 1906 and 1911.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid. In 1896 alone there were at least ten such strikes, involving 1,627 strikers. So common were they, that they were coded as one of the fourteen most common causes of strikes in the stats. des grèves. This cause was eleventh on the list, coded 'K'.

18 ADN M 625 106, 'Grèves, textiles, 1899'.

19 Ibid. 'Rapport. Tourcoing. Novembre 1899'.

20 See Perrot, Les Ouvriers, p.

21 ADN M 625 106 'Chanson nouvelle, "Les Trieuses"', by Victor Capart.

22 Ibid., 'Grèves textiles, 1899'.

23 It should be pointed out that this survey of the press was not complete. Further searching of the local non-left press might well turn up some reaction to this strike, though normally such articles would have been clipped and placed in the departmental archives.

24 The 1906 Statistiques des grèves recorded three all-female strikes concerned with re-hiring fired workers. Three of these workers were female, but one was male. One mixed strike in 1902 broke out in support of an ouvrière who had been fined heavily for an error in her work. The press reports of

strikes also showed a number of strikes in which men and women joined together to support co-workers of both sexes.

25 'Dans le Nord', VdP, 13-20 avril, 1902, and 20-27 avril 1902.

26 Among such reports are 'L'Etat de siège dans le Nord', VdP, 11-18 octobre 1903 (which reported 5,000 troops facing 5,000 textile strikers in Lille) and 'Les Grèves du textile', in VdP 25 oct.- 1 nov. 1903.

27 Enquête sur l'industrie 1904.

28 Jean Jaurès, 'Discours prononcé à Caudry le 25 octobre 1903', RS, Rome XXXVIII, juillet-décembre 1903, p. 578.

29 Albert Thomas was, at this time, a young socialist militant whose commitment was to the independent socialism represented by Millerand. His career is described in Madeleine Rebérioux, La République radicale?, Paris, 1975, p. 72, and Georges Lefranc, Le Mouvement socialiste sous la troisième république, tome I, 1875-1920, Paris, 1977, p. 106, n. 1.

30 Albert Thomas, 'La Grève textile - Lille', L'Humanité 18 avril 1904, 19 avril 1904.

31 VdP, 11-18 octobre, 18-25 octobre, 25 octobre - 1 novembre

1903, and 3-10 avril, 10-17 avril, 17-24 avril, 24 avril - 1 mai, 2229 mai, 3-10 juillet, 10-17 juillet 1904. This series is noteworthy for its revelation of the confusion that marked the French workers' movement at the turn of the century. In some early pieces, writers complained of the socialists' political interference in the strikes, then later applauded the efforts of local socialist officials and leaders of the guesdiste Fédération nationale de l'industrie textile. The journal was particularly laudatory when describing the strike delegates - Delory, V. Renard, Mme Sorgne, Henry Creton, and Leman - all of whom were politically-involved socialists. Victor Renard was, moreover, the national leader of the Guesdist textile federation, which adhered to the CGT until Renard provoked a split over the general strike issue at Amiens.

32 Only L'Humanité's reports evoked any sense of Flanders. On 19 avril 1904 their reporter described 'the streets and crossroads of Roubaix, Tourcoing and Lille', where "toute la population, joyeusement, se rendait 'aux courses' quelques grèvistes, hommes ou femmes, ont fait sonner les sébilles rouges et rassemble quelques gros sous'.

33 See VdP, 10-17 avril and 17-24 avril 1904. Violence

was not all on the side of the patronat, of course. The château of one patron, Mlle Cayez, at Neuvilly, was burned during one night. Several strikers were arrested, but set free.

34 'Les Soupes communistes', VdP, 24 avril - 1 mai 1904, and untitled report in 22-29 mai 1904.

35 Ibid.

36 VdP, 25 oct. - 1 nov. 1903, H, 19 avril 1904.

37 Ibid.

38 Rebérioux in République radicale describes some of the integration of women into such groups, although so little was known about the fin de siècle presence of women in socialist or syndicalist organisations when she wrote her book that she is understandably wrong in her dating. On p. 41 she notes that the first group of 'femmes socialistes' was founded during the Dreyfus affair. Such groups existed well before that time, in the Lille area and elsewhere. She also dates the penetration of women into groups of Free Thinkers - 'more popular and proletarian than Freemasonry' in her words - at the turn of the century (p. 45) though again evidence from Lille suggests that it happened earlier there.

Chapter 8

1 'I Beg You, Remember the Ladies' is a paraphrase of a letter written by Abigail Adams to her husband John, in which she pleaded that the framers of the American Constitution not overlook women in granting rights. She went unheeded. The letter is quoted in Matilda Joslyn Gage, 'Document 1: Preceding Causes', in M. and P. Buhle, eds., The Concise History of Woman Suffrage, Chicago, 1978, p. 58.

2 See Lucie Baud, 'Les Tisseuses de soie dans la région de Vizille', MS, Tome II, janvier-juin, 908, pp. 418-25.

3 Ibid., p. 419.

4 Legislation providing for arbitration in strikes - like most industrial legislation in the early years of the Third Republic - provided no means of enforcing decisions that emerged from the process.

5 Baud, 'Les Tisseuses', p. 420.

6 Ibid.

7 The penalties of male chauvinism!

8 Baud does not say what happened to the other blacklisted women - at least some of whom had children to support - but the effectiveness of the tactic undoubtedly discouraged militance among the Vizelle women for

several years.

9 Waist-coat makers and laundresses, respectively. The former lived in Ville sur Sâone, the latter in Villefranche-sur-Sâone.

10 Two francs were nearly a day's wages for most women in this period. The narrative of this strike is found in Georges Yvetot, 'Association des femmes', VdP, 27 août - 3 septembre 1905.

11 Ibid.

12 In ibid., the reporter noted that the 'usual' song was the Internationale.

13 E. Giraud, 'L'Exploitation de la Femme', VdP, 18-25 juin 1905.

14 Raymond Dubéros, 'Dix centimes de salaire pour la façon d'une corsage', VdP, 12-19 février 1905. Duberos was a couturieur and an anarchist, active in the CGT drive for a 1906 general strike. See Georges Lefranc, MS, tome I, Paris, 1977, p. 149.

15 The problems of organising umbrella makers in Naples still plague left-wing groups. Maria Macciocchi, in Letters to Louis Althusser (London, 1969) described her encounter with these thousands of Neopolitan umbrella makers when she was standing for election (representing the Partito communista italiano) in terms that suggest that time has stood

still since 1905.

16 See 'Clemenceau guerroie contre des femmes', VdP, 18-25 novembre 1906. These women, who worked in an out-putting system, undoubtedly had a better chance to organise than other women who worked in the system because they gathered together every morning to recieve their oranges, and probably met other times during the day. Corsage-makers and umbrella-makers were given their raw materials by a middle man who usually visited them; thus they rarely gathered in a group with their co-workers.

17 One was in the Cevennes mountains, in the Gard, where 5,000 silk workers struck for unified, and higher wages. See 'Les Fileuses des Cevennes', VdP, 23-30 décembre 1906. The women won.

18 See Baud, 'Les Tisseuses', pp. 421ff.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid. It should also be noted here that these Isère ouvrières were both socialists and active feminists. They were also among the most militant female workers in France. See Compère-Morel, et al., Encyclopédie socialiste, syndicale et cooperative de l'Internationale ouvrière. Tome II, Paris, 1913, p. 153, where 'un petit noyau de femmes socialistes'

is identified as having existed in the Rhone in 1879. Their influence spread to the Isère, and tome III (Paris, 1921) of the Encyclopédie described the socialist-feminists of the Isère in 1890 (p. 250) and 1910 (p. 251).

21 Yves Lequin, in Les Ouvriers de la région lyonnaise, 2 vols., Lyon, 1977, has also discussed the politics of these women, in vol. 2, pp. 139, 145, 257, and 263.

22 Lequin, in ibid., vol. 1, p. 154, quotes a contemporary who remarked that the Piedmontese were so exploited in that region that they were 'les chinois de l'occident'.

23 See Victor Renard, 'Dans l'industrie textile - les trucs patronaux', H, 26 janvier, 1907.

24 See 'Dans l'est - Grève générale des ouvriers et ouvrières en chaussures de Lanenveville-les-Râon', VdP, 28 juillet - 4 août 1907.

25 AN F^7 13819, 'Textile - 1908'.

26 Ibid.

27 'Les Filatures de Roubaix', H, 9 novembre 1908. The most detailed description of the 1909 strike is found in Léon de Seilhac, La Grève du tissage de Lille, Paris, 1910. Other repots are found in AN

F^7 13820. 'Textiles. Presse. 1909', and H, novembre, 1909. Of the two early strikes, one involved 270 ouvrières in Tourcoing, and the other 2,000 at Roubaix.

28 C. Denis, 'Les Ouvriers en soiries du sud-est', VdP, 17-24 mai 1908.

29 See various clippings in AN F^7 13820, 'Textiles. Presse. 1909'.

30 See Renard, 'Dans l'industrie', and de Seilhac, La Grève.

31 Clippings from both papers are found in AN F^7 13820.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 de Seilhac, La Grève, p. 22.

35 Ibid., p. 72.

36 Ibid., p. 63.

37 See Georges Yvetot, 'Midinettes et Chardons', VdP, 11-18 septembre, 1910.

38 'La Grève de la maison Esders, couturières, Paris', VdP, 7-14 août, 1910.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 Georges Yvetot, 'Les Vaillantes Midinettes', VdP,

17-24 décembre 1911, and Yvetot, 'Grève des Femmes', and 'Solidarité aux femmes', VdP, 24-31 décembre 1911.

42 See ibid., 'Solidarité'.

43 See ibid., 'Grève'.

44 On eighteenth-century women's riots see Olwen Hufton, 'Women in Revolution, 1789-1796', Past and Present 53 (1971), pp. 90-108; and on food riots specifically, Louise Tilly, 'The Food Riot as a Form of Political Conflict in France', Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 2 (1971), pp. 23-57. Such 'riots' are not particularly controversial among historians of women, as they are usually agreed 1) to have occurred, and 2) to have had a political content - albeit in Tilly's case, a particularly 'female' one.

45 Georges Yvetot, 'Bravo, les femmes', VdP, 3-10 septembre 1911.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 Emile Pouget, 'L'Emeute de la faim', GS, 6-12 septembre 1911.

51 B. Broutchoux, 'Quelques détails', GS, 6-12 septembre, 1911.

52 'Echoes - "Belles Mesdames"', ibid.

53 'Les Menagères du Nord luttent contre la vie chère', BS 28 août 1911.

54 'La Révolte des affamés', VdP, 10-17 septembre 1911.

55 B. Broutchoux, 'Quelques détails'.

56 None of the usual police or departmental reports of left-wing activities shows these 'riots'. Furthermore, as no SFIO or CGT militants were involved, there are no memoirs. And feminists apparently took little interest, as there are no reports of the food strikes in the extensive collection of the Bibliothèque Marguerite Durand. Further digging in the ADN and municipal libraries of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing may turn up additional material, though much was lost during the two German invasions of the area.

57 AN F^7 13820. 'Textile - 1910-14'.

58 These were, no doubt, Peter Stearns's "eternal enemies of strikes and syndicalism". See Revolutionary Syndicalism and French Labour: A Cause without Rebels, New Brunswick, N.J., 1971', p. 32. The report came from Peuple de Bruxelles, and was quoted in 'Le Lock-out des carroissiers - un geste des

femmes', VdP, 14-21 septembre 1912. A similar incident, where miners' wives voted to continue a strike at Anvers in 1904, was reported in 'Un Referendum de femmes', VdP, 5-12 juin 1904.

59 Capy herself remains something of an enigma. Neither Madeleine Guilbert (Les Femmes et l'organisation syndicale) nor Marie-Helene Zylberberg-Hocquard (Féminisme et Syndicalisme en France, Paris, 1978) mentions Capy, nor does Charles Sowerwine (Les Femmes et le Socialisme, Paris, 1978). I have only just discovered the existence of a book by Capy which is, if I am not mistaken, autobiographical (Une Voix de femme dans la mêlée, Paris, 1916), and I hope to find it as I return to France to broaden my research.

60 Marcel Laurent, 'L'Enfer des raffineries', BS, 14 mai 1913. The same issue also contains an anonymous report on the strike, 'Une Grève des femmes'.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 This casts a rather doubtful light on the 'J-curve theory of revolution'. See, e.g., Ted Gurr, Why Men Rebel (sic) Princeton, 1970.

64 'La Grève des raffineuses. Une belle réunion', BS, 14 mai 1913.

65 Ibid.

66 See ibid., and 'La Grève Lebaudy. Enthousiasme exemplaire', BS, 15 mai 1913, and 'Rapport', idem.

67 Ibid. The facts of this strike, like those of all the others discussed in this chapter, make nonsense of any claim that married women, or mothers, 'escaped the factory'. Many women brought their children to strike meetings.

68 Ibid.

69 BS, 22 mai 1913.

70 'Parti Socialiste' in BS, 10 juin 1913, reports a meeting of the Groupe des femmes socialistes at which a leader, Elisabeth Renaud, congratulated the Lebaudy strikers. The syndicalist militant, Hélène Brion, immortalized this strike in her autobiography, La Voie féministe (Paris, 1978). She recounted there the often-repeated story of the arrival one morning at the factory gates of a weeping woman, pursued by her husband, who hit and kicked her in an effort to force her back to work. The striking ouvrières, Brion reported, finally rescued their co-worker after 'a real battle'. See p. 6. Perhaps this man escaped Peter Stearns's attention when he claimed the role of 'eternal enemy of strikes and syndicalism' as women's role!

71 Marcelle Capy, 'Exploitation et espionage', BS, 25 août 1913; Capy 'La Femme à l'atelier', BS 26 août 1913. Lille had evidently changed since the conditions depicted in Zola's Au Bonheur des Dames.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

74 Capy, 'Les Esclaves de "La Vigneronne"', BS 4 septembre 1913 and 6 septembre 1913.

75 Ibid.

76 Capy, 'Une Boîte à surprises', BS 12 septembre 1913. It might be reiterated that 2fr. 25 per day would not support a single person - much less a woman with children - especially not in Paris.

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid. In this issue of BS, Capy announced that her series had drawn many distressing letters from ouvrières, telling her of their bad conditions. She hoped that women would begin signing such letters, so she could offer help - though she understood the fear that argued for anonymity. Poverty-stricken ouvrières did not dare risk being blacklisted for political militance.

79 'Une Grève des femmes à l'usine Desmarais', BS 2 and 5 octobre, 1913.

80 J.B. Knockaert, 'La Lutte contre le patronat textile à Tourcoing', BS, 13 octobre 1913. Knockaert, the secretary of the local socialist syndicat, described the employers' attempts to divide the women from the men.

81 Guilbert, in Les Femmes (pp. 414ff) gives the details.

82 See note 20 , supra.

83 See especially Venise Pellat-Finet, 'L'Action Syndicale féminine', VdP, 1-8 février 1914. Pellat-Finet was an institutrice, and secretary of the Isère section of the Fédération féministe universitaire. She was also a national director of that organisation, and editor of its journal, L'Action féministe. She noted in this article that the municipality of Vienne (under socialist control for two years) fully supported women's rights. In Vienne, a textile worker, Claudette Coste, also an F.F.U. member, was on the Conseil des prud'hommes.

84 'Les Ouvriers et ouvrières en ganterie de Millau', BS, 11 janvier 1914.

85 'A la fabrique Loncle et frères - Grèves des femmes', BS, 18 janvier 1914.

86 Vignaud, 'Les Ouvriers et ouvrières en parapluie d'Aurillac', BS, 6 février 1914, Pierre Dumas, 'Chez les ouvrières en parapluie, BS 10 février 1914,

87 'Les Ouvrières en parapluie d'Aurillac', BS, 14 février and 20 février 1914, and 'Une Grande Belle Victoire', BS, 23 février 1914.

88 Dumas, Chez les ouvrières.

89 Ibid. Such 'seasonal' occupations were exempt from protective hour restrictions, as well as from the one day of rest per week law.

90 'Une Grande Victoire', BS, 23 février 1914.

91 Ibid.

92 See, inter alia, Maxence van der Meersch, Quand les sirènes se taisent, Paris, 1933.

93 M. Capy, 'Filature au mouillé', BS, 26 mars, 1914.

94 'A Travers les barreaux', BS, 30 mars 1914.

95 M. Capy, 'A l'usine de lampes Osram', BS, 29 septembre - 5 octobre 1914.

96 Some of the inter-war years' socialist-feminist activities are being studied by Anne-Marie Sohn. See also, Madeleine Colin, Ce n'est pas d'aujourd'hui, Paris, 1975; Jean Rabaut, Histoire des féminismes français, Paris, 1978, pp. 275-304.

97 This is the view of Eric Hobsbawm, 'Sexe, symboles, vêtements et socialism', Actes de la Recherche en sciences sociales, 23 (Septembre 1978), pp. 2-18.

98 Albistur and Armogathe, Histoire du féminisme français, tome 2, Paris, 1977, p. 544.

99 See discussion of the CGT view in Chapter 9.

Chapter 9

1 See Eugene Delacroix's 'Liberty Leading the People'. The painting is discussed in Hélène Ademar, 'La Liberté sur les barricades de Delacroix', Gazette des Beaux-arts, 43 (février, 1954), pp. 83-92, and George Heard Hamilton, 'The Iconographical Origins of Delacroix's "Liberty Leading the People"', in Dorothy Miner, ed., Studies in Art and Literature, Princeton, 1954, pp. 55-66. Numerous studies of the iconography of women exist. Among them are William Lederer, The Fear of Women, New York, 1968, Eva Figes, Patriarchal Attitudes, Greenwich, Conn., 1970; Susan Okin, Women in Western Political Thought, Princeton, 1979, and Ian Maclean, The Renaissance Notion of Woman, Cambridge, 1980.

2 See Okin, ibid.

3 AN F^7 13820, 'Grèves. Textiles'. Rapport, Chambre syndicale ouvrière textile a Roubaix, commissariat special du police, (month and day illegible), 1909.

4 The concept comes from Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, trans. H.M. Parshley, London, 1953

pp. xixff. Virginia Woolf, in A Room of One's Own, New York, 1945, made a similar point: "Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size".

5 Georges Yvetot was an anarchist and a typographer, whose views on women differed radically from those held by most men in that occupation.

6 G. Yvetot, 'Association des Femmes', VdP, 27 août - 3 septembre 1905.

7 G. Yvetot, 'Midinettes et Chardons', VdP, 11-18 septembre 1910. Mark Twain called this lapse into florid prose the 'artificial flower complaint', which he said afflicted male reporters when faced with women. See Twain, Life on the Mississippi, New York, 1961, p. 261.

8 G. Yvetot, 'Bravo les femmes', VdP, 3-10 septembre 1911.

9 See, inter alia, 'Mouvement Internationale. Belgique. Le Lock-out des carrossiers', VdP, 14-21 septembre 1912.

10 Francis Million, 'La femme et l'enfant', VdP, 21-28 juillet 1912.

11 'Après la Victoire', BS, 14 mai 1913.

12 Jules Michelet's opinions are discussed in Virginia Crawford, 'Feminism in France', Fortnightly Review, LXI (January-June, 1897), pp. 524-34. See also Gustave Simon, Jules Simon, La Femme du Vingtième siècle, Paris, 1892.

13 'Les Fileuses des Cevennes', VdP, 23-30 décembre 1906.

14 One article dealing with early nineteenth-century medical opinion is Yvonne Knibiehler, 'Les Médécins et "la Nature féminine" au temps du Code Civil', Annales e.s.c., 4 (juillet-août, 1976), pp. 824-45, and Angus McLaren, 'Doctor in the House: Medecine and Private Morality in France, 1800-1850', Feminist Studies, 2 (1975), pp. 39-54.

15 Raymond Dubéros, 'Dix Centimes de salaire pour la façon d'un corsage', VdP, 12-19 février 1905.

16 This affair is discussed in Chapter 10.

17 See L. Monnier, 'La Femme esclave', VdP, 16 mars 913.

18 Raymond Dubéros, 'L'Exploitation'; VdP, 20-27 mai 1905.

19 Octave Soyer, 'Garderies Enfantines - Simple Réflexions', VdP, 11-18 août 1912. This article is particularly significant in this context because it discussed the sorrow of both parents which resulted from having to leave young children uncared for while the parents went out to work, but described the physical appearance only of the mothers.

20 Marcel Laurent, 'L'Enfer des Raffineries', BS, 14 mai 1913.

21 Marcelle Capy, 'Les Esclaves de "La Vigneronne"', BS, 4 septembre 1913. Almost the same words are used in Capy, 'Filature au mouillé', BS, 26 mars 1914.

22 Capy, 'Visite d'une filature d'étoupe', BS 31 mars 1914.

23 Capy, 'Midi à la porte d'une filature', BS, 3 avril 1914. Capy, 'Filature du coton', BS, 6 avril 1914.

24 'Les Fileuses des Cévennes', VdP, 23-30 décembre 1906.

25 Georges Yvetot, 'L'Association des femmes', VdP, 27 août - 3 septembre 1905.

26 Ibid.

27 'G.Y.' (sic), 'Midinettes et Chardons', VdP, 11-18 septembre 1910.

28 Francis Million, 'La Femme et l'enfant', VdP, 21-28 juillet 1912.

29 'Rapport. La Grève Lebaudy', BS, 15 mai 1913.

30 G. Dumoulin, 'Les Femmes et l'organisation ouvrière', VdP, 31 août - 7 septembre 1913.

31 Given women's pervasive control over beliefs and ideas, it is surprising that they allowed negative stereotypes to continue. Of course Yvetot here is playing with a logical contradiction that resulted

from his unconscious conviction that 'humanity' was male, and that the children whose ideas mothers shaped were boys. See Yvetot, 'Association des Femmes'.

32 F. Million, 'La Femme et l'enfant'.

33 Leyssieux's correspondance with Renard appeared in 'Protestation du syndicat des ouvriers en soiries de Vizille', VdP, 12-19 mai, 1907.

34 The Compte-rendu du sixième congrès national ouvrier de l'industrie textile à Reims 14-16 août 1904, Lille, 1904, shows that Baud was singled out for a special welcome, and was named as 'assesseur du Bureau de congrès' at two meetings. The Compte-rendu, dixième congrès, Troyes, 15-17 août 1908, Lille, 1908, shows another woman - 'the widow Agulhon - was similarly made an 'assesseur'.

35 The facts of her life are found in Baud, 'Les Tisseuses de soie dans la région de Vizille', MS, Tome II (janvier-juin 1908), pp. 418-25. The extent of her literacy may be judged by her use of the historical past tense when appropriate.

36 Ibid., p. 418.

37 See Ibid., p. 419.

38 Ibid., p. 422. Baud described with horror the appalling conditions in which the Italian women

were living and working, concluding in these words:

> Elles en étaient réduites à ramasser dans les caisses à ordures les débris de légumes que jettaient leurs camarades françaises!

39 Leyssieux, 'Protestation'.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 Desrumeaux's accounts are given in Madeleine Colin, Ce n'est pas d'aujourd'hui, Paris, 1975, pp. 92 and 114. Desrumeaux was a child in our period, but Colin solicited none of her memories of that time. She was ultimately sent to Ravensbruck, with several other female communist militants.

43 Evidence left by male workers - as opposed to union leaders - suggests that at least some men acted out of a conviction that concrete workers' issues were not of interest only to male workers. See, inter alia, Octave Soyer, 'Garderies enfantines. Simples réflexions', VdP, 11-18 août 1912, and 18-25 août 1912. These two articles were written by 'un ouvrier manuel', Who apologised for being inarticulate and uneducated, before he argued strongly for child care centers which would relieve the care of working mothers and fathers.

44 Yves Lequin, in Les Ouvriers de la région lyonnaise, 2 vols., Lyon, 1977, uncovered many more women's

strikes in this period, including, e.g., one of fileuses in 1885 (vol. 2, p. 139) and in 1888 (idem., p. 145), one of gantières in 1893 (idem. p. 257), one of cardeuses in 1900 (idem. p. 263). Other careful regional studies, which do not depend on the completely unreliable records of the central government will, I am certain, continue to uncover a plethora of women's strikes, which have hitherto been neglected.

45 It might be reiterated that while Yvetot, Million and other leaders were exclaiming in amazement over women on strike, many citizens living in the area of the strike were providing real help.

46 The leader of the Fédération du livre, A. Keufer, was a prototype of the 'male chauvinist pig' of his generation. Madeleine Guilbert, in Les Femmes et l'organisation syndicale avant 1914, Paris, 1966, discusses him on pp. 53ff.

47 A brief history of Durand's union organising activities is found in Jean Rabaut, Histoire des féminismes français, Paris, 1978, pp. 231-32. The CGT's distress at the Ligue féminine syndicale d'action stemmed not from the group's success, but from the fear that feminism would divide the class struggle. See also Guilbert, Les Femmes, pp. 400-02.

48 Her first call to ouvrières is found in 'Communications. La Comité d'action féministe syndicaliste', VdP, 28 juillet - 4 août 1907. Among the group's founding principles were: to propagandise and organise 'les travailleuses isolées'; to organise via Bourses du travail, but to allow each regional organisation 'complete autonomy'; and to allow both men and women to join.

49 See 'La Femme et le Syndicalisme', BS, 5 septembre 1913; 'Comité féminin, Appel aux femmes', BS 14 octobre 1913, 'Un Appel aux femmes', BS, 24 octobre 1913; an untitled announcement of a meeting in Lyon, BS, 22 novembre 1913; and the coverage of women's syndical activities and the debate between the sex struggle and class struggle in Marie Guillot, 'Action Syndicale féminine', VdP, 4-11 janvier, 1914, 11-13 janvier 1914, and 18-25 janvier 1914; Venise Pellat-Finet, 'L'Action Syndicale féminine', VdP, 1-8 février 1914; Pellat-Finet, 'La Femme devant la CGT', VdP, 9-16 février 1914; S. Charpillon, 'La Femme à l'atelier', VdP 16-22 mars 1914; Fernand Mammale, 'Le Problème féminin', VdP, 30 mars - 5 avril 1914; Venise Pellat-Finet, 'Action Syndicale féminin - Susceptibilités', VdP, 6-12 avril 1914; L. Couriau, 'Mon Opinion', idem.; Fernarn Bellugue, 'Les Jeunes et les femmes',

idem; 'Le Plaidoyer du Féminisme', VdP, 13-19 avril 1914; Adrienne Ratgris, 'L'Action syndicale chez les femmes', VdP, 27 avril - 3 mai 1914; G. Dumoulin, 'Ligue féminin d'action syndical', VdP, 11-17 mai 1914.

50 Both Marie Guillot and Venise Pellat-Finet tried to resolve the split between feminists and syndicalists (see articles cited, ibid.) but neither succeeded. Both women had experienced enough male hostility - from socialists as well as syndicalists - that they believed women's groups to be necessary.

51 See Francis Million, 'Les Femmes et l'action syndicale', VdP, 13-19 avril 1914, and Ratgris, 'L'Action syndicale'. (Ratgris was the leader of the Ligue féminin d'action syndicale du Rhône).

52 'Les Manifestations en province', BS, 11 juin 1913.

53 G. Dumoulin, 'Ligue féminin d'action syndicale', VdP, 11-17 mai 1914.

54 Jeanne Bouvier, Mes mémoires - ou 59 années d'activité industrielle, sociale et intellectuelle d'une ouvrière, Vienne, 1936, pp. 70-1.

55 This is, I think, a fair paraphrase of the ideas articulated by Georges Yvetot and others.

56 See, e.g., E. Giraud, 'L'Exploitation de la femme', VdP, 18-25 juin 1905. Giraud was a couturière in Paris.

57 The budgets of working class families in these years are discussed in Chapter 1.

58 Today, French women remain effectively outside the mainstream of both political and economic organisations, particularly among the leadership. The problem is analysed in detail in Gisele Halimè, ed., Choisir la cause des femmes, Paris, 1978, and Madeleine Guilbert, 'Les Femmes actives en France, Bilan 1978', in La Condition féminine (Centre d'études et de recherches marxistes), Paris, 1978. Madeleine Colin, in Ce n'est pas d'aujourd'hui, Paris, 1975, estimates that women are 25% of syndicated workers in France today, though they comprise more than 37% of the total number of workers, p. 197. Colin, however, is a Parti communiste français militant, whose enthusiasm for both that party's efforts and those of the CGT (informally linked to the PCF since 1947) suggests caution when reading her analysis. For example, she described the exaggerated welcome offered ouvrières by the CGT as 'lyrique et émouvant' while others might find it patronising. See, e.g., p. 207.

Chapter 10

1 Those of anarchist persuasion within the movement held to an 'anti-doctrine' doctrine - as well as to an anti-centralisation doctrine.

2 The one of these not discussed in the preceding chapter, the Fédération nationale des ouvriers et ouvrières des manufactures de tabacs, had a mostly female membership; not surprising, as most tobacco workers were women. (in 1891, the fédération had 7,791 members, of whom only 827 were men. In 1894, there were 9,577 members, 1,003 of whom were men. See Madeleine Guilbert, Les Femmes, les organisations syndicales avant 1914, Paris, 1966, pp. 93-9.

3 A chart of this process is found below, note 24

4 The Broussists, who were on their last legs by about 1895, concentrated on working within municipalities. Their orientation was, therefore, local, not national. Their strength in Paris has frequently led historians to overestimate their importance. The Allemanists also never built a strong, centralised national party, though they were the first to exert control over their parliamentary deputies (requiring them to pay into party funds). Allemanists were primarily 'ouvrier-ists' - promoting workers'

candidacies for party and electoral offices. They deployed some administrative control from the centre, but it bore little resemblance to Jules Guesde's tight administrative and ideological control. The Blanquists were most like the Guesdists, insofar as they were tightly centralised, with tactical decisions made in Paris. But they lacked an administrative hierarchy, and followed only a vague ideology. Finally, the Independents, led by Jean Jaurès, came to resemble a traditional political party. They elected deputies and supported the ministry of Millerand in the Waldeck-Rousseau government. Two general studies of these groups are Jacques Droz, Le Socialisme démocratique, Paris, 1966, and Georges Lefrance, Le Mouvement socialiste sous la troisième république, tome I, Paris, 1977.

5 The most thorough account of Guesdism is Claude Willard, Les Guesdistes, Paris, 1965.

6 An account of this early period is found in Lefranc, MS, tome I, pp. 13-48, and in Charles Sowerwine, Les Femmes et le socialisme, Paris, 1978, pp. 9-38. Marilyn Boxer's 'Socialism Faces Feminism in France: 1879-1913,' Ph.D., University of California, Riverside, 1975, covers the period in question, but very inadequately, pp. 7-35.

7 A. LeRoy's 'Chant des Prolétaires', printed in Le Prolétaire, 21 décembre 1878, expressed this Proudhonist view of women working:

> En notre siècle, on voit l'humble ouvrière/
> Victime encore, d'un plus triste destin:/
> Ou bien la honte, ou bien le cimetière/
> Souvent pour elle, il n'est d'autre chemin.

8 Jules Guesde, La Femme et la société bourgeoise, Paris, 1923, pp. 38-9. Those in support of such an idea called for state intervention to regulate women's and children's working hours. This, they thought, would 'prevent capitalists from using women to undercut men's wages'. See Léon Blum, Les Congrès ouvriers en France, 1876-97, Paris 1899, pp. 30 and 35.

9 Ibid., p. 12.

10 See Léon de Seilhac, Les Congrès ouvriers en France, 1876-97, Paris, 1899, p. 30, and Blum, ibid., p. 35.

11 These words are found in Guesde, La Femme, p. 40, where he quotes his own words originally published in Le Socialiste, 9 octobre 1898.

12 L'Egalité covered several women's strikes in this period. See, inter alia, 6 and 27 janvier, 3 février, and 16 juin 1878.

13 The usual wording of such agenda items was "le travail des femmes et des enfants"; the two groups continued to be linked throughout our period. These comments comprise a discussion of Jules Guesde, 'Le Travail des Femmes', E, 27 janvier 1878.

14 See Karl Marx, 'The German Ideology, Pt. 1', in Robert Tucker, ed., The Marx-Engels Reader, New York, 1872, pp. 110-66.

15 Jules Guesde, 'Le Travail'.

16 Guesde, 'De la Famille', E, 16 juin 1878.

17 These prejudices were discussed in Chapter 9, supra.

18 Hubertine Auclert's biography is given in Charles Sowerwine, Les Femmes, pp. 14-18. She was linked to both the socialists and the bourgeois feminists, and she tried throughout the 1880s to link the two movements. In the end, she chose feminism.

19 Women's participation in various revolutionary movements in France is described, in inter alia, Jane Abray, 'Feminism in the French Revolution', American Historical Review, 80 (1975), pp. 43-62. Harriet Applewhite and Darline Levy, 'Women of the Popular Classes in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1795', in Carol Berken and Clara Lovett, eds., Women, War and Revolution, New York, 1980, Olwen Hufton, 'Women in Revolution, 1789-1796', Past and Present, 53 (1971), pp. 90-108, Marie Cerati, 'Le Club des citoyenne républicaines-révolutionnaires', Paris, 1966, Edith Thomas, Les Pétroleuses, Paris,

1963, and in the Mémoires de Louise Michel, Paris, 1977.

20 Women of all classes could not be tied to Marx's revolutionary class, the proletariat. The latter was not merely a contingency in marxist theory, but rather comprised that class which carried the socialist revolution within its existence in a bourgeois capitalist society. Of course the lack of theoretical consistency implied in such a proposed alliance need not have precluded its creation - witness both the Guesdists' and Leninists' mingling of the peasantry with the revolutionary proletariat. Nonetheless, women had problems peculiar to them as a sex which were not posed by the problems specific to a male peasantry. And the socialist revolutions of this century have certainly proved Auclert's prediction - women, she said, would be "trompées par les prolétaires comme les prolétaires l'ont été par les bourgeois". (Quoted in Jean Rabaut, Histoire des féminismes français, Paris, 1978, p. 175.)

21 Blum, Les Congrès, p. 41.

22 Ibid.

23 Seilhac, Les Congrès, p. 48. The socialist position in support of women was bolstered by the 1880 founding of l'Union des femmes, an auxiliary group

within the movement. It was led by Léonie Rouzade and Eugénie Pierre, who were joined by Hubertine Auclert and Margaret Tinayre. All these women moved back and forth from socialism to feminism throughout the 1880s. See Sowerwine, Les Femmes, pp. 20-3.

24 The split is described in Seilhac, Les Congrès, pp. 68-76. Léon Blum provided a clear diagram of the various splits in Les Congrès, which I reproduce here:

Cong. nation. ouvriers

1876. Paris I
1878. Lyon II
1879. Marseille III
1880. Le Havre IV

Congrès modérés

1881. Paris V
1882. Bordeaux VI

Congrès socialistes

1881. Reims V
1882. St.-Etienne VI-Roanne VI

Congrès Possibilistes

1883. Paris VII
1884. Rennes VII
1887. Charleville IX
1890. Châtellerault X

Congrès Guesdistes

1884. Roubaix VII
1890. Lille VIII
1891. Lyon IX
1893. Paris XI
1894. Nantes XII
1895. Romilly XIII
1896. Lille XIV
1897. Paris XV
1898. Montluçon XVI
1899. Epernay XVII
1900. Ivry XVIII

Congrès Broussistes

1892. Paris XI
1894. Tours XII
1899. Paris (conference)

Congrès Allemanistes

1891. Paris X
1892. St.-Quentin XI
1894. Dijon XII
1895. Paris XIII
1896. Paris XIV
1897. Paris XV

Congrès Généraux des Organisations socialistes

1899. Paris I
1900. Paris II

25 See Dramatis Personae, supra.

26 A similar view is described by Peter Laslett, The World We Have Lost, New York, 1965.

27 Jacques Girault, ed., Paul Lafargue: Textes choisis, Paris, 1970, p. 172.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 See Jules Guesde and Paul Lafargue, Le Programme du Parti ouvrier, Paris, 1883.

31 Quoted in Seilhac, Les Congrès, p. 89.

32 Ibid.

33 See Sowerwine, Les Femmes, p. 30.

34 Ibid., p. 34.

35 Ibid., p. 36.

36 'Mouvement social. Paris', E, 25 février 1880. Many historians of working women have perpetuated this myth that women worked (and work now) for 'extra money' that the family does not 'really' need. A recent excerpt from a book by Eddie Hunt (British Labour History, 1815-1914, London, 1981), printed on The Guardian's 'Women's page' ('When the TUC Said "STAMP OUT WOMEN"', 6 February 1981, p. 10) asserts, 'Women's unionism would have been weak in

any event because women workers were easily pleased and conditioned to regard work as of secondary importance to the home and family". Not surprisingly, the generalisation is unsupported. Nevertheless the French evidence for this period suggests the necessity for research in order to determine the truth of such notions.

37 The difficulties of both George Sand and Flora Tristan were well-known among French feminists in the late nineteenth century. The right to parental authority was a prominent demand in bourgeois feminism in the second half of the century. See Maïté Albistur and Damel Armogathe, Histoire du feminisme français, Paris, 1977, p. 521.

38 Of course a fair proportion of working class children were supported by mothers, not only in cases of single mothers, but also where the father was unemployed. Many politically active textile workers experienced the latter phenomenon first hand, including Gustave Delory (whose wife worked as a cotton devideuse at home and supported the family during the late 80s), and Henri Ghesquière (whose wife was a street merchant, and helped in the estaminet he was finally able to start in 1896).

39 See Guesde, 'L'Emancipation des femmes et le socialisme', E, 31 mars 1880.

40 E 23-26 mai, 30 juin, 14 juillet 1880.

41 'Résolution du congrès ouvrier collectiviste révolutionnaire de la région du centre', E, 28 juillet 1880.

42 'Une Grève', LF, 15 octobre 1882.

43 Ibid.

44 'Grèves des fileuses. Chez LeBlan frères', LF, 22 octobre, 1882.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 'La Presse bourgeoise et le parti ouvrier à Lille', LF, 5 novembre 1882.

48 See ibid., and 'Les Incidents de Lille', E, 1 novembre 1882.

49 Quoted in ibid., 'La Presse'.

50 The denigration of political women by an exaggerated interest in their physical appearance is frequently remarked, recently in Miriam Cross, 'Testament of Shirley Williams', The Observer, Sunday 22 March 1981, p. 15. Ms. Williams noted that the obsession with her hair - or that of Barbara Castle or Margaret Thatcher - was a press reaction to a woman in politics. The Oxford student journal Cherwell recently denigrated an N.U.S. 'Take Back the Night' demonstration by implying that Fiona McTaggart, NUS president, was not

worth raping (i.e. not beautiful or sexually alluring) anyway. The precise date of the edition has been lost, though it was October, 1980.

51 'Louise Michel', LF, 5 novembre 1882.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 LF, 15 octobre 1882, which contained two letters from female textile workers, one of whom signed herself 'Une lectrice désirant la suppression de la propriété individuelle'.

56 'Rapport de Reims', LF, 10 septembre 1882.

57 Announcement in LF, 12 novembre 1882. The report of other meetings included the remarks that women were charged less than men as they earned less. See LF, 26 novembre, 17 décembre, and 24 décembre 1882. (Typically, tickets cost men about 40 centimes and women half that.)

58 LF, 17 décembre 1882, and 31 décembre 1882.

59 LF, 4 mars 1883.

60 Ibid., 1 avril 1883. Paule Mink was the featured speaker at meetings announced in LF on 29 avril, 13 mai, and 20 mai, 1883, but her subject was 'De la révision, ce qu'elle devrait être'.

61 See CdF, 4 mai, 1884, and 'Bureau de bienfaisance', CdF, 18 mai 1993.

62 Two women's groups had been represented at the 6e Congrès national du Parti ouvrier Roanne, in 1882 (see E, 1 octobre 1882), and there were also two at the 7e Congrès, at Roubaix in 1884. One was from Roanne, and one from Rouabix. See Compte-rendu, 7e Congrès national du Parti ouvrier, Roubaix, 29 mars - 7 avril 1884, Paris, 1884.

63 L'Exploitation de la femme', CdF, 3 aout 1884.

64 CdO, 29 mars - 5 avril, 1885.

65 RdF, 30 août 1885.

66 'A Travers les bagnes', RdF, 13 septembre 1885.

67 Ibid.

68 See ibid., and 'L'Intelligent Jules Morel', RdF, 11 octobre 1885.

69 'Au diner de Saint-Mande', RdF, 1 novembre 1885.

70 Both Léonie Rouzade and Paule Mink were frequent contributers.

71 Rouanet was one of the regular writers for RS. He was a Millerandist, and stood for the Chambre as an independent socialist from the Seine in 1893. (He was elected.) Attitudes such as his were more prevalent among the Independents. Charles Sowerwine

describes the on-going problems between the non-guesdiste Groupe féministe-socialiste (founded in 1899) and the Jaurès-led Independents, in the years between 1900 and 1905, in Les Femmes et le socialisme, Paris, 1977. RS offered other examples of hostile attitudes to women. One, by Joannès Sagnol ('L'Egalité des sexes', tome IX, janvier-juin 1889, pp. 685-97) attempted a 'scientific' study, which discussed relative brain sizes, and so on.

72 G. Rouanet, 'Le Travail des enfants et des femmes', RS, tome 3 (1886), p. 198.

73 Ibid., p. 210.

74 'Correspondance, Paris, 31 mars 1886', RS, tome 3 (1886), p. 345. Lemel (also spelt 'Le Mel') was long a militant socialist in Paris. In 1867 she had founded a cooperative restaurant. She was also a member of the International. After the Commune, she was exiled to New Caledonia with Louise Michel. In 1891, back in France, she joined a group of women who moved back and forth between feminism and socialism, including Leonie Rouzade, who was the only one to speak under the auspices of the Nord POF.

75 'Elections municipals de Lille', CdT, 11-14 avril 1888.

76 Ibid.

77 CdT, 1-4 mai 1888.

78 Before arguing these points, some background needs to be traced. In 1888, the local PO decided to offer candidates for the legislature in 1889, and for the cantonal council in 1890. Boulangism, however, cut into socialist support, and in 1889 the candidate, Gustave Delory, received only 17% of the votes in his Lille district. The majority of votes went to Boulangists and radicals. In Roubaix and Tourcoing in that year, a second ballot alliance between the socialists and radicals elected radical candidates. In 1890, Delory stood in another Lille district for the cantonal council and was elected - the first socialist to hold a non-municipal post in the Nord. From that point - though with a few setbacks - the PO (later the SFIO) increased its hold on the Lille and Roubaix electorates.

79 'Etude sur le programme du P.O.', CdT, 12-16 mai 1888. All the following is also taken from this long special edition of the paper.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.

82 See Chapter 9 supra.

83 'Les Droits de l'ouvrière', CdT, 30 mai-2 juin 1888.

84 Discussions of women's participation in such socialist activities are found on pp. in Chapter 5.

85 'Les Droits de l'ouvrière'.

86 Paul Lafargue, 'La Famille', CdT, 9 février 1890.

87 Ibid. The reader will recall that these 'delights' included 'providing' all the family's needs, including clothes and food, as well as maintaining those items and cleaning, etc.

88 'Le Livre du Parti socialiste', CdT, 16 février 1890.

89 Henri Ghesquière, 'Les Droits de la femme', CdT, 1 juin 1890.

90 Ibid. Ghesquière's emphasis on separating the issue of women's rights from those of 'men' suggests that the bourgeois feminist movement's influence was being felt. These women had been highly visible at the centenary of the Revolution in 1889 and after. A description of their movement is found in Jean Rabaut, Histoire des féminismes français, Paris, 1978, pp. 167-186.

91 Ghesquière quoted Hubertine Auclert, who was, at that time, trying to marry socialism and feminism. Her ideas are discussed in Charles Sowerwine, Les Femmes, pp. 16-23.

92 A discussion of the French conflict within the Second International is found in James Joll, The Second International 1889-1914, London, 1968. It should be noted here that many of the women who might have played an influential role in Guesdist feminism concentrated their energies elsewhere during these years. Paule Mink, for example, returned to Montpellier and re-organised her group 'L'Ouvrière' which had been dormant since 1869. See Mink, 'Correspondance. Montpellier 20 janvier 1891', RS, tome XIII, (janvier-juin 1891), p. 341, in which Mink describes her group and thanks Benoît Malon - the editor of RS - for his support.

93 In the German case, this form was necessitated by a

law forbidding women to belong to political parties. Also, most German women of the working class did not work after marriage. Thus the women's groups were necessary to bring housewives together. The emphasis of these groups was on housewifely hints, and so on. One treatment of women in the SPD is Jean Quataert's Reluctant Feminists in German Social Democracy, 1885-1917, Princeton 1979.

94 'Les Cantines scolaires', LT, 21 janvier 1893. See also Chapter 6, passim.

95 'Lille - La Grève du chez Rémy-Lyon', LT, 11 janvier 1893.

96 'Les Cantines'.

97 See ibid. and 'Lille - La Grève du chez Rémy-Lyon', LT, 11 janvier 1893.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid., le mai 1893.

100 LT, 12 février 1893.

101 LT, 14 octobre, 18 octobre 1893.

102 Henri Ghesquière, La Femme et le socialisme, Lille, 1893. See LT, 4 octobre 1893, and Compte-rendu, onzième congrès national du Parti ouvrier tenu à Paris, 7-9 octobre 1893, Lille, 1893.

103 This is discussed in Claude Willard, Les Guesdistes, Paris, 1966, p. 104.

104 Ibid., p. 106.

105 Local women's activities in the years 1894-95 appeared to flourish, and when the Parti ouvrier held its 3rd regional congress, in 1894, a Roubaix group sent delegates, one of whom, Citoyenne Clabaut, was appointed assessor of one of the sessions. See reports of this meeting in LT, 21 février and 25 février 1894.

106 Aline Valette, 'La Femme dans l'usine', LT 3 février 1894.

107 Ibid.

108 A. Valette, 'La Femme et la loi morale', LT, 7 avril 1894.

109 See reports of public meetings in LT, 17 mars, 28 avril, 5 mai and 16 mai 1894.

110 A. Valette, 'Appel aux ouvrières', LT, 28 avril 1894.

111 'La Réunion de l'Hippodrome à Lille', LT, 16 mai 1894.

112 Ibid.

113 'Roubaix. Groupe la Revanche des femmes socialistes', LT, 15 septembre 1894.

114 Ibid.

115 Valette's trajectory began with an advice manual for housewives (1883) which scorned women who 'evaded' their duties as mothers. Ten years later,

after a career among bourgeois feminists, she joined the POF, and was named to the national council of the party. See Charles Sowerwine, Les Femmes, p. 53, Willard, Les Guesdistes, p. 648-9. See also A. Valette, Socialisme et sexualisme, Paris, 1895, and APP Ba/1.290, 'Dossier Aline Valette'. The latter file contains the report of a police spy who was certain he knew the reasons for the POF's choice of Valette as their token woman. He wrote "La citoyenne Aline Valette est la maîtresse de Guesde". Moreover, other members on the national council believed she was 'dangerous' to him, because she 'sapped his vital energies'.

116 Quoted in Willard, ibid.

117 Jules Guesde, 'La Grève de Roanne', LT, 2 janvier 1895.

118 See Compte-rendu, 13e congrès national du Parti ouvrier français tenu à Romilly, 8-11 septembre, 1895, Lille, 1895.

119 Willard, Les Guesdistes, p. 362 discusses the congress, and Valette's comments were reported in 'Congres socialiste', La Mémorial de la Loire, 11 septembre 1895.

120 Mention of women in the wide variety of press clippings collected in 'Le Congres International socialiste de Londres, juillet 1896, Tomes I-III. Article divers parus dans la presse', in the Musée Social, Paris, is rare.

When women were mentioned, the terms were sexist, particularly those used in the following reports: 'Congrès socialiste de Londres', La Réforme de Bruxelles, 29 juillet 1896; 'Nouvelles de l'Etranger. Le Congrès de Londres', La Gazette de Lausanne, 30 juillet 1896, Paul Villars, 'Figaro à Londres', Le Figaro, 29 juillet 1896', F. Henderson, 'Full Report of the Proceedings of the International Workers' Congress, London', The Labour Leader, London, 1896.

121 See Mary Foster, 'Women at the International Congress', an unidentified clipping found in ibid.

122 Of the dissension, James Joll has remarked, 'The contrast between English and foreign socialists has never been more clearly marked'. Joll, The Second International, p. 74. Paul Lafargue's view of the problems was remarkably sanguine. See Lafargue, 'Socialism in France from 1876-1896', Fortnightly Review, LXII (July - December 1897), pp. 445-58.

123 See Compte-rendu, 15me Congrès national du Parti ouvrier français tenu à Paris 10-13 juillet 1897, Lille, 1897.

124 The history of this group and its 1913 successor, the Groupe des femmes socialistes, are the object of Charles Sowerwine's Les Femmes.

125 See Compte-rendu, p. 34.

126 See Georges Lefranc, MS, pp. 103-5.

127 THe second meeting of socialist tendances included no women's groups. See Compte-rendu sténographique, deuxième congrès général des organisations socialistes françaises, à Paris, 28-30 septembre, 1900, Paris, 1901. No mention was made of women at the 19th congrès of the POF in Roubaix in 1901. See AN F^7 12522, 'Socialisme', and Bulletin officiel: Rapport au XIX congrès tenu à Roubaix (15-18 septembre 1901), Fédérations du Nord, Lille, 1901. The independents, on the other hand, continued to attract female delegates, and to commit themselves to women's rights, including suffrage. See AN F^7 12522, 'Socialistes', Tours congrès, 1902.

128 These groups are described in some detail in Chapter supra.

129 See the story of the 1895 female workers' strike at Rémy, Chapter 7 supra.

130 The benefits are listed in Felix Chabrouillaud, 'La Municipalité de Roubaix', MS, tome III (janvier-juin 1900), pp. 545-55, and Henri Ghesquière, 'L'Action des municipalités socialistes: Assistance communale à Lille', MS tome I (janvier-juine 1899), pp. 117-21. The included, inter alia: free legal

help, free layettes, benefits to unmarried mothers, free medical care, free maternity care, municipal crèches, pensions, food and fuel for poor families, free clothing to school children, hot school lunches, adult education for men and women, a municipal bath house (costing 20c.) and a sanitarium for sick children.

131 Myer Siemiatycki, in 'Guesdism and anti-collectivism in Roubaix-Wattrelos', M.A. dissertation, University of Sussex, (n.d.), and Leslie Derfler, 'Reformism and Jules Guesde 1891-1904', International Review of Social History 12 (1967), pp. 66-80, have made this point about Guesdism in general, i.e., that confusion between reform and revolution led to confusion among the party's voters, and consequently to a loss of support.

132 This problem of Tourcoing's uniqueness remains a vexed one. No one has provided a completely plausible explanation for the differences. It was a smaller city, with a more generous, and more homogeneous patronat.

133 The local socialist newspapers were full of such social events throughout the 1880s and 90s. See LF, CdF, RdF, CdO, LT, CdT.

134 See Carl Schorske, German Social Democracy, 1905-1917,

Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1955, pp. 116-45, and Jean Quataert, Reluctant Feminists in German Social Democracy, 1885-1917, Princeton, 1979.

135 Charles Sowerwine, Les Femmes, discusses this group in painstaking detail.

136 This line is discussed in Chapter 8.

137 Actes du congrès international de la condition et du droit des femmes, Paris, 1890, offers a list of feminist demands that together characterised bourgeois feminism in France. Durand and La Fronde are described in Jean Rabaut, Histoire des féminismes, pp. 207-244.

138 See Compte-rendu, congrès de la condition et du droit des femmes tenu à Paris, 1900, Paris, 1901, pp. 75-78. The exchange is frequently quoted by historians of women.

139 Ibid. Renaud had worked as a domestic, but then obtained qualifications as an institutrice. It might be interesting to add that her daughter married Guesde's son.

140 See, e.g., Léonie Rouzade, Petit catéchisme de morale laïque et socialiste, Meudon, 1895, in which she stated that her essential conviction was that "le travail est le créatur de tout", (p. 7). She differed from most other socialists, however, in

proposing that motherhood was a social function that should be treated as work and paid by the state, (p. 22).

141 See Comptes-rendus:

19me Congrès national du Parti ouvrier tenu à Roubaix, 15-18 septembre 1901, Paris, 1901.

Fédération du Nord: 28e Congrès regional tenu à Caudry, 5 août 1900, Lille, 1900.

Idem. 29e Congrès régional tenu à Douai, 7 avril 1901, Lille, 1901.

Idem. 30e Congrès régional tenu à Fresnes, 9 février 1902, Lille, 1902.

Idem. 31e Congrès régional tenu à Croix, 24 août 1902, Lille, 1902.

Idem. 32e Congrès régional tenu à Valenciennes 31 mai 1903, Lille 1903.

Idem. 33e Congrès régional tenu à Lille, 3 juillet 1904, Lille 1904.

142 See the admirably lucid description of this process in Georges Lefranc, MS, pp. 105-13.

143 This local dispute is discussed in André Morizet, 'Les Faits Politiques. La Scission de Roubaix', MS, tome 1 (janvier-juin 1902), pp. 394-95. Morizet says that Carette's new party was called 'le Parti ouvrier socialist Roubaixien'. See also Robert Baker,

A Regional Study of Working-Class Organization in France, Ph.D., Stanford University, 1967, pp. 106-42, whose detailed discussion is summarised here. It might be noted that Carette's wife was the driving force behind Robaix's Comité des femmes, and if it was still in existence after the turn of the century, this split disbanded it.

144 See Morizet, ibid.

145 This strike is discussed in Chapter 7

146 ADN M154 76, 'Lille, 13 mai, 1901', Sorgue's dossier at Bibliothèque Marguerite Durand, Paris, contains some press clippings, most of which described her physical charms. One writer, Eugène Thebault (Le Petit Son, 22 juin 1901), said she had "Spanish eyes and a Parisian smile". Another (Henri Coutant, 'Une Héroine Socialiste', L'Actualité, 29 novembre 1899) declared, "Happily for her, Mme Sorgue has nothing of the usual aspect of socialist viragos, of whom Louise Michel remains the legendary prototype. She is very pretty...though a bit fat, following the fashion." Sorgue was also one of the very rare women who appeared in Compere-Morel, et al., Encyclopédie socialiste, syndicale et coopérative de l'Internationale ouvrière, tome II, Paris, 1913, p. 145. That book contains a picture of Sorgue, and called her the founder of 'les comités

socialistes revolutionnaires d'Aubin-le-Gua', of the Parti socialiste révolutionnaire.

147 ADN M 154 74, 'Rapport. Police. Lille, 9 novembre 1901'.

148 Ibid. 9 aout 1901. Her name was sometimes spelt 'Pajaud'. See ADN M154 76 'Rapport. Préfecture. Cambrai, 17 mars 1901', and AN F^7 12501, piece 354, where she was called 'Pegeau' in a report of her lecture at Houplines, August, 1901.

149 ADN M154 76 'Lille, 20 mai 1901'.

150 AN F^7 12522. 'Rapport. Préfecture. Lille, 18 septembre 1901'.

151 See compte-rendu, note 1, supra. See also AN F^7 12522, 'Socialisme', and Bulletin Officiel: Rapport au XIX^{me} congrès tenu à Roubaix, Fédération du Nord, Lille, 1901.

152 AN F^7 12522 'Commisariat de Police de Roubaix, 16 février 1901'.

153 AN F^7 12522. 'Congrès socialiste à Tours, 1902'.

154 'Programme', La Dépêche, 6 mars 1902, which is found in ibid. This carton contains numerous clippings reporting this congrès. None metnions women.

155 See MS and RS 1899-1905. The former had twenty articles on the issue of women in these years, and

only five from 1908 to 1914.

156 FS, mai 1901.

157 There were similarities between these Belgian women and American feminist-abolitionists, who were forced to choose between continuing to support Negro rights (in this case the extension of suffrage to black men in the proposed Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution) and lobbying for the extension of the right to vote to men and women at the same time. This process is thoughtfully presented in Ellen DuBois, Feminism and Suffrage, Ithaca, New York, 1978. The Belgian women were going to learn the lesson learnt by the Americans: that backing male rights won none for women. See also 'Le Mouvement féminist, socialist, et prolétarian', FS, novembre 1901, in which the French women applauded the Belgian women's choice of class over sex.

158 'Manifeste des Femmes socialistes Belges', FS, août 1901.

159 'Le Mouvement féminist', FS.

160 See, e.g., Georges Weill, 'Le Mouvement féminist social en Allemagne', FS, mai 1901; Emma Lucht, 'Pays scandinaves. Un Congrès féminist scandinave', MS, tome II (juillet-décembre 1902), pp. 1521-24; Weill, 'Les Partis socialistes allemagne. Les congrès

des femmes socialistes et des socialistes allemands a Munich', ibid., pp. 1892-1902.

161 This estimate is found in E. Dolléans, 'Féminisme et propriété', MS, tome 3 (septembre-décembre 1903), pp. 351-66. More detailed descriptions of women in the SPD are found in Jacqueline Strain, Feminism and Political Radicalism in the German Social Democratic Movement, 1890-1914, Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley, 1964, and Karen Honeycutt, Clara Zetkin, Ph.D., Columbia University, 1975.

162 The split was represented by that between Lily Braun, a 'feminist' (though one closer to Aline Valette than to Hubertine Auclert), and Clara Zetkin. See Jean Quataert, Reluctant Feminism, pp. 65-83, 107-36.

163 Eugene Pottier, 'En Avant! La Classe Ouvrière', CdT, 4-8 mai 1888

164 These contradictions are described in Lefranc, MS, p. 58.

Chapter 11

1 See Lefranc, MS, p. 134.

2 Or, in Lefranc's words, one that was more 'closed'. See ibid., pp. 134-59.

3 Ibid., p. 134.

4 See Tony Judt, Socialism in Provence 1871-1914, Cambridge, 1979. Claude Willard states that in 1894-99, 60% of the Parti ouvrier's membership was

industrial workers. Half of its members were in the Nord and Pas de Calais. See Willard, Les Guesdistes, p. 597.

5 Lefranc, MS, pp. 136-7.

6 The local outlines are not entirely clear. The struggle's history is contained in fragmentary fashion in AN F^7 12495, 'Activité socialiste dans le département du Nord (1905-1914)'. Pièce 332 records a violent debate in Roubaix in 1906 between the CGT's Merrheim and the PO's Henri Lefebvre, leader of the Chambre syndicale ouvriere textile de Roubaix. Pièce 295 reports a Lille meeting, in May, 1907, where Delory warned workers of the dangers of a quarrel with syndicalists. Pièce 279 reported a similar meeting on 19 June, 1907, also in Lille. In 1908, local officials sent a confidential report dated 14 avril, to the prefect, documenting the struggle (pièce 25).

7 The other socialist women's movements are discussed by several authors in Jean Quataert and Marilyn Boxer, eds., Socialist Women, New York, 1978, though the collection is mediocre.

8 See Sowerwine, Les Femmes, pp. 149-60.

9 See FS, mai 1913.

10 The discussion of the CGT's practical activities

among female workers is found in Chapter 9, supra.

11 I found no support for widespread male hostility among the workers of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing, except in the restrictive syndical statutes of the early years, though of course Victor Renard's reaction to the women of the Isère textile syndicat suggests that there was hostility among local leaders. However, other Frenchwomen did encounter it. See, for example, Jeanne Bouvier, Mes Mémoires - ou 59 années d'activité industrielle, sociale et intellectuelle d'une ouvrière, Vienne, 1936; Hélène Brion, La Voie feministe, Paris, (n.d.), and examples collected by Marilyn Boxer, 'From Foyer to Factory: Working-class Women in 19th century France', Proceedings of the Second Meeting of the Western Society for French History, November 21-23, 1974, Austin, Texas, 1975, pp. 192-203.

12 Again, this is discussed in Chapter

13 See, e.g., D. Seurin, Le Repos hebdomadaire, VdP, 10 août 1902, 'Conférence de la citoyenne Sorgue sur les huit heures, aux paysans aveyronnais', VdP, 29 juillet, 1906, Octave Soyer, Garderies enfantines, VdP, 11 août 1912.

14 Coverage of the ensuing debate in both VdP and BS was thorough between 1913 and 1914. It is discussed in Chapter 8 supra.

15 Charles Sowerwine, in Les Femmes, details this rejection, p. 107-8.

16 In the campaign against military conscription, this view of women showed up clearly. See Jean Jaurès, 'Les Femmes et la guerre', H, 1 décembre 1912.

17 Jean Longuet estimated that women comprised slightly more than one-half the waged workforce in France. See 'Statistique des femmes dans les pays industriels', H, 8 juillet 1913. He was doubtless not including small peasant proprietors.

18 Madeleine Guilbert's Les Fonctions des femmes dans l'industrie, Paris, 1966, details the increasing employment of women in metallurgy in the twentieth century.

19 Robert Baker's A Regional Study of Working-Class Organisation in France, Ph.D. Stanford University, 1967, discusses the problems of the SFIO in Lille on pp. 271ff.

20 See Sowerwine, Les Femmes, pp. 92-8. Louise Saumoneau reacted by dropping out of political life until 1913.

21 Ibid., p. 115.

22 It proved ironic that the International was simultaneously approving such separate women's groups.

23 Virtually all the books on French feminism make this point, including Jean Rabaut, Histoire des fèminismes, pp. 187-206, Maïté Albistur and Daniel Armogathe, Histoire du féminisme français, pp. 405-29, 507-15.

24 When, for example, Marguerite Durand's female compositors were refused admittance to the typographer's syndicat, she sent them in to break a male typographers' strike at Nancy in 1901. See Guilbert, Les Femmes et l'organisation syndicale, p. 229.

25 These issues are found in Compte-rendu. 2e Congrès international des oeuvres et institutions féminins, Paris, 1900, Vols. I-IV, and Actes du congrès international des oeuvres et institutions féminins, Exposition universelle International 1889, Paris, 1890; Mme Vincent, Electorat et éligibilité des femmes aux conseils des prud'hommes, Paris, 1897.

26 See in H, A. Bracke, 'Le Vote des femmes', 19 janvier, 1912; E. Peluso, 'Ce que pense Clara Zetkin du mouvement des femmes socialistes en France', 12 mars 1913; A. Bracke, 'Le Suffrage des femmes', 6 juillet 1913; A. Compère-Morel, 'Socialisme et féminisme', 28 février 1914.

27 This is not the place to discuss the degree to which the French case fit definitions of a bourgeois revolution, though that project remains controversial.

Nevertheless it should be noted that this revolution is assumed to have begun in 1789 and to have ended in about mid-nineteenth century.

28 Several authors have treated the effects of the Code on the status of women in France. See, e.g., Barbara Pope, 'Revolution and Retreat', in Carol Berkin and Clara Lovett, eds., Women, War, and Revolution, New York, 1980, pp. 215-36.

29 The 1905 Russian Revolution, of course, heightened these expectations.

30 Evidence of women's 'reactionary voting' is everywhere unsatisfactory. The first vote after American women got the suffrage saw the election of Warren G. Harding by an equal number of men and women, according to Professor Eric Foner (who mentioned this on 17 February 1981). Montana's women voters helped send the first woman to Congress in 1917 (Jeanette Rankin). More recently, the Gallup poll has 'shown' that more men voted for Ronald Reagan than women. In France, the election immediately following women's suffrage returned a left-wing government. The point is that voters of both sexes vote differently in different contexts. Furthermore, men elected a long string of conservative governments in France, and sent a number of priests to the Chambre in the Belle Epoque.

31 Jean Longuet, 'Féminisme et socialisme', H, 19 juin 1907.

32 See note 19, supra.

33 This position was clearly expressed in 'Féminisme officieux', H, 26 mars1907.

34 See Jean Jaurès, 'Le Droit politique des femmes', H, 9 décembre 1912.

35 See Jean Quataert, Reluctant Feminists, p. 94.

36 Congrès socialiste internationale d'Amsterdam, 14-20 août 1904, Rapports et Projets de résolutions sur les questions de l'ordre du jour, supplément. Bruxelles, 1904, p. 20.

37 Ibid., p. 87.

38 Ibid., p. 135.

39 Ibid., pp. 144-45.

40 Compte-rendu analytique, 7e congrès socialiste internationale, Stuttgart, 16-24 août 1907, Bruxelles, 1908.

41 Ibid., p. 330.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid., p. 337.

44 Ibid., p. 343.

45 Ibid., pp. 344-45. Popp's speech was the only one interrupted frequently by applause and shouts of agreement, and it was the one most vehemently

concerned with wives and mothers.

46 Ibid.

47 A description of the Gleichkeit mother's campaign is found in Karen Honeycutt, Clara Zetkin, Ph.D., Columbia University, 1975, pp. 292ff.

48 See Compte-rendu analytique, 1907, p. 345.

49 Compte-rendu analytique, 8e congrès socialiste internationale, Copenhague, 28 août-3 septembre 1910, Gand, 1911.

50 Ibid., p. 214.

51 See ibid., p. 223 and 225, respectively.

52 Compte-rendu, 1910, Appendix. 'Resolutions de la conference Internationale des femmes socialistes'.

53 Ibid., pp. 492-93.

54 This point is made for France in Chapter 9 supra.

55 Compte-rendu, 1910, Appendix, p. 493.

56 Charles Sowerwine, in Les Femmes, notes that the radicals allowed women to become 'jeunesses republicaines', but not to join the party proper.

57 There were a plethora of such groups after the turn of the century. See Albistur and Armogathe, Histoire du féminisme, pp. 520-21, which lists eleven. Those mentioned in the socialist press, or connected with various women who were involved with socialism, included

L'Egalité (founded in 1889 by Mme Vincent), Fédération française des sociétés féministes (1891), La Fronde, of Marguerite Durand (1897).

58 See Compte-rendu analytique, Parti socialiste, S.F.I.O. 2e congrès nationale, Chalon-sur-Sâone, 29-30 octobre - 1 novembre 1905, Paris, (n.d.).

59 See dramatis personae, supra. Additional information is found in Marilyn Boxer, 'Socialism Faces Feminism', in Boxer and Quateart, eds., Socialist Women, pp. 75-111.

60 This term developed out of the American suffrage struggle and is now in common usage.

61 Compte-rendu analytique, 3e congrès nationale, Limoges, 1-4 novembre 1906, P.S.(S.F.I.O.), Paris, p. 147.

62 Ibid.

63 It might be noted that every element of Pelletier's argument had been heard before, and all had been offered in every country where women were, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, agitating for the vote. The British 'antis' arguments are traced in Brian Harrison, Separate Spheres, London, 1978. The American case is detailed in Eleanor Flexner, A Century of Struggle, New York, 1968, and Ellen DuBois, Feminism and Suffrage, Ithaca,

New York, 1978. Richard Evans, in The Feminist Movement in Germany, London, 1976, traces the deployment of these arguments in the German context.

64 Compte-rendu analytique, p. 147.

65 Temma Kaplan has argued that Spanish women in this period went to mass for this same reason: i.e. they found a social life there. See Kaplan, Anarchists of Andalucia, Princeton, New Jersey, 1977. This was doubtless the case in areas where men socialised in cafe-bars from which women were excluded. Women were not so excluded in Lille, Roubaix, and Tourcoing, however.

66 Compte-rendu analytique, p. 147.

67 Ibid., p. 149.

68 Ibid., p. 150.

69 Neither of the next two party congresses mentioned the issue of women's rights. See Compte-rendu sténographique, 4e congrès nationale, Parti Socialiste (SFIO), Nancy, 11-14 août 1907, Paris, 1907, and Compte-rendu sténographique, 5e congrès nationale, Parti Socialiste (SFIO), Toulouse, 15-18 octobre 1908, Paris, 1908.

70 Compte-rendu stenographique, 6e congrès nationale Parti Socialiste (SFIO) St. Etienne, 11-14 avril 1909, Paris 1909, p. 513.

71 Ibid.

72 See Comptes-rendus sténographiques: 7e congrès nationale, P.S. (S.F.I.O.) Nîme, 6-9 février 1910, Paris, 1910; 8e congrès nationale, P.S.(S.F.I.O.) St. Quentin, 16-19 avril 1911, Paris, (n.d.); 9e congrès nationale, P.S. (S.F.I.O.) Lyon, 18-21 février 1912, Paris, (n.d.); 10e congrès nationale P.S. (S.F.I.O.) Brest, 23-25 mars 1913, Paris, (n.d.); 11e congrès nationale, Amiens, 25-28 janvier 1914, Paris, (n.d.).

73 The campaign for the 'English Week' was launched by both the SFIO and CGT in 1911. See report in 'Douzième congrès du textile', H, 17 août 1911. Guilbert, in Les Femmes et l'organisation, reproduces one of the fiches from this campaign on pp. 420-1. The three-part illustration begins 'A l'Atelier', with two female hand-loom weavers at work. The second, 'Le Samedi Après-midi', shows a woman tidying up her home. The last, 'Le Dimanche en famille', shows a woman playing with a child and picking flowers while in the background a man is fishing. Others end the three-part picture with one showing several men going into the library or reading, while women in the foreground still played with the children.

74 See compte-rendu, 13e congrès, fédération nationale ouvrier textile, Fourmis, 15-17 août 1912, Lille, 1912.

Other Compte-rendu consulted include: 8e congrès, F.N.O.T., Tourcoing, 12-15 août 1906, Lille, 1906; 9e congrès, F.N.O.T., Saint-Dié, 15-17 août 1907, Lille, 1907; 10e congrès, F.N.O.T., Troyes, 15-17 août 1909, Lille, 1909; 11e congrès, F.N.O.T., Lyon, 15-18 août 1909, Lille 1909; 12e congrès, F.N.O.T., Roubaix, 13-16 août 1911, Lille, 1911.

75 The figure is according to the head of the textile federation, Victor Renard, in 'Après notre XII congrès', H, 22 août 1911.

76 Louise Chaboseau-Napias, 'Les Femmes et le socialisme: les femmes socialistes en France et à l'Etranger', H, 19 février 1907. She wrote a second piece, in H, 30 août 1907, following the Stuttgard ICSW meeting, called 'Appel aux femmes'.

77 I have been unable to trace this woman except to find that she was a member of the Parti Socialiste, Fédération de la Seine during this period. She has no dossier at the Archives de la préfecture de Police and none at the Bibliothèque Marguerite Durand. Sowerwine (Les Femmes, p. 136, no. 36) could not find any biographical information either.

78 A discussion of the 'double slavery' argument as used by, e.g., Aline Valette and Paule Mink in the 1880s and 90s, is found in Chapter 5 supra.

79 Longuet was the son of Marx's eldest daughter.

80 Jean Longuet, 'Féminisme et socialisme, Une entretien avec une "Suffragette"', H, 19 juin 1907. See also a report of the French women's welcome of the suffragettes in 'Les Suffragettes à l'Humanité', H, 18 juin 1907. Knight's view of French ouvrieres' plight was shared with Theodore Stanton, in The Woman Question in Europe, New York, 1884, pp. 234-309.

81 It was reported in M. Biais, 'Comité d'action féministe syndicaliste', H, 21 juillet, 1907.

82 'Candidats aux prud'hommes', H, 25 novembre 1908; 'Résultats des élections aux prud'hommes', H, 30 novembre 1908; 'Ballotage aux élections de prud'hommes', H, 6 décembre 1908; 'Victoire féministe', H, 14 juillet 1909.

83 Longuet, 'Propagande feminine', H, 31 juillet 1910.

84 Ibid.

85 Jaurès, 'Les Femmes et la Guerre', H, 1 décembre 1912.

86 The category is used among historians of the American feminist movement of the period, including Katherine Sklar, Catherine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity, New Haven, Conn., 1973, and Aileen Kraditor, Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, New York, 1965. For Jane Addam's views, see Alan Davis, American Heroine, New York, 1973. The domestic feminists argued that women were different from men, more moral, less competitive,

and so on. On these grounds they demanded equality of rights.

87 J. Jaurès, 'Le Droit politique des femmes', H, 9 décembre 1912.

88 Ibid.

89 See 'Document 64: Jane Addams, "The Modern City and the Municipal Franchise for Women", Baltimore, Maryland, February 7-13, 1906', found in Mari Jo and Paul Buhle, eds., The Concise History of Woman Suffrage, Urbana, Illinois, 1978, p. 371.

90 Sowerwine, Les Femmes, pp. 149-68 documents these changes.

91 E. Peluso, 'Ce Que pense Clara Zetkin du mouvement des femmes socialistes en France', H, 12 mars 1913.

92 Ibid. One of those meetings is discussed in Chapter X supra. What Zetkin did not realise is that those meetings resulted in separate socialist women's groups in the area. Like the others writing about the events of 1913, she hailed the GdFS as a new thing.

93 Marcel Deschamps, 'Le Congrès des socialistes du Nord', H, 1 octobre 1913.

94 'La Commission Administrative de la Fédération du Nord; Un Appel aux femmes', H, 24 novembre 1913.

95 Ibid.

96 See above, pp.

97 Dr. Madeleine Pelletier, 'Les Femmes et le féminisme', RS, Tome 43 (janvier-juin 1906), pp. 37-45.

98 Ibid., p. 45.

99 Pelletier's history is recounted by Sowerwine, Les Femmes, pp. 125-6. To summarise, she was born of a pious mother and an anti-religious father. The latter raped her when she was 12. She made her own way through school, and in 1899, when she was 25, she became the first woman doctor of public assistance. In 1906 she was granted the credentials of a psychiatrist - the first woman again. She ended her days in an insane asylum in Vaucluse, where she was sent for giving abortions. Pelletier was articulating the dilemma shared by many 'exceptional women', who exhibit difficulties identifying themselves as women, rather than unique individuals acceptable to the male world. Susan Sontag coined the term, in 'The Third World of Women', Partisan Review, (1974), pp. 473-77.

Pelletier, however, gave short shrift to other exceptional women who were not feminists. In 'La Question du vote des femmes', LRS, tome 48, (juillet-décembre 1908, p. 194), she wrote of Mme Roland: "par une aberration peu compréhensible mais fréquente cependant chez les femmes distinguées, n'etáit pas

féministe. Elles craignait en revendiquant pour son sexe en général de diminuer sa valeur personnelle.'

100 Ibid.

101 Catherine Buisson, 'Revue des livres', LRS, tome 49 (janvier-juin 1909), pp. 181-82.

102 Louise Chaboseau-Napias, 'Le Droit de suffrage pour les femmes', LRS, tome 44 (juillet-décembre, 1906), pp. 145-66. Among those surveyed, the Italian socialist, Enrico Ferri, was the least equivocal. He stated that women's right to vote was not open to debate. Further, he did not believe that women would vote in a reactionary way, but if they did, this could not alter socialists' support for their right. From the French party came the views of the Blanquist, Vaillant, and Jean Allemane, both of whom supported the vote.

103 Saumoneau's position has been remarked before above.

104 See Chapter 8 supra.

105 This theory of 'socialisation' into sex roles will be familiar to all readers of recent feminist material. Pelletier's work shows that virtually all constituents of this 'new' theory have a long history. Many adherents of the socialisation theory argue a case that combines Pelletier's with Valette's. Thus they

believe that some of the results of female socialisation, especially non-competitiveness - should be saved and extended to male socialisation. A controversial collection of essays on this subject is Virian Gornick and Barbara Moran, Women in Sexist Society, New York, 1971. See also Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, New York, 1952, pp. 301-67, and Huquette Bouchardeau, Pas d'histoire, les femmes..., Paris, 1977.

106 Marcelle Capy's description of textile families in these years supports this view. See Chapter 1 supra. A visit to Brindisi, Italy, or Mazattan, Mexico, will show a situation remarkably unchanged. Small girls labour beside their mothers doing laundry, sweeping, caring for younger children, while boys play in the streets.

107 Pelletier, 'Le Prétendu infériorité psychophysiologique des femmes' LRS, tome 47, (janvier-juin 1908), p. 45.

108 Ibid. Pelletier returned from post-revolutionary Russia with her prescription unchanged. See Albistur and Armogathe, Histoire du féminisme, Vol. 2, p. 574.

109 These categories are described in Shela Rowbotham, Women, Resistance and Revolution, New York, 1972.

110 'Revue des Livres', MS, tome 7 (juillet-décembre 1910), pp. 79-80.

111 Ibid.

112 'Appel des groupes féministes socialistes', FS, mai 1901.

113 'Le Droit des femmes', LFS, juillet, 1901; 'Le Suffrage politique des femmes et le POB', LFS, novembre 1901.

114 Suzanne Pechin, 'Encore du féminisme', LFS, mars 1902.

115 'Le Droit des femmes'.

116 Elisabeth Renaud, 'Les Femmes Allemandes', LFS, juillet 1901.

117 Elisabeth Renaud, 'Un Mot sur le cas de Jaurès', LFS, septembre 1901. This did not represent any change in the group's vigorous anti-clericalism. The same edition carried a song by 'A.L.' called 'Contre les Robes Noires' and an article by Renaud on the negative influence of the church on girls ('L'Affaire Lebaudy').

118 'Groupe féministe socialiste du Ve', LFS, mai 1901 and 'Lettre', LFS, août 1902.

119 'Appel des Groupes féministes socialistes'.

120 See LFS, 23 janvier 1913, and 'Appel aux femmes socialistes de Lille', LFS, 15 avril 1913.

121 'Résolution. Conference Internationale extraordinaire des femmes socialistes, Berne, mars 1915', LFS, mai 1915.

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